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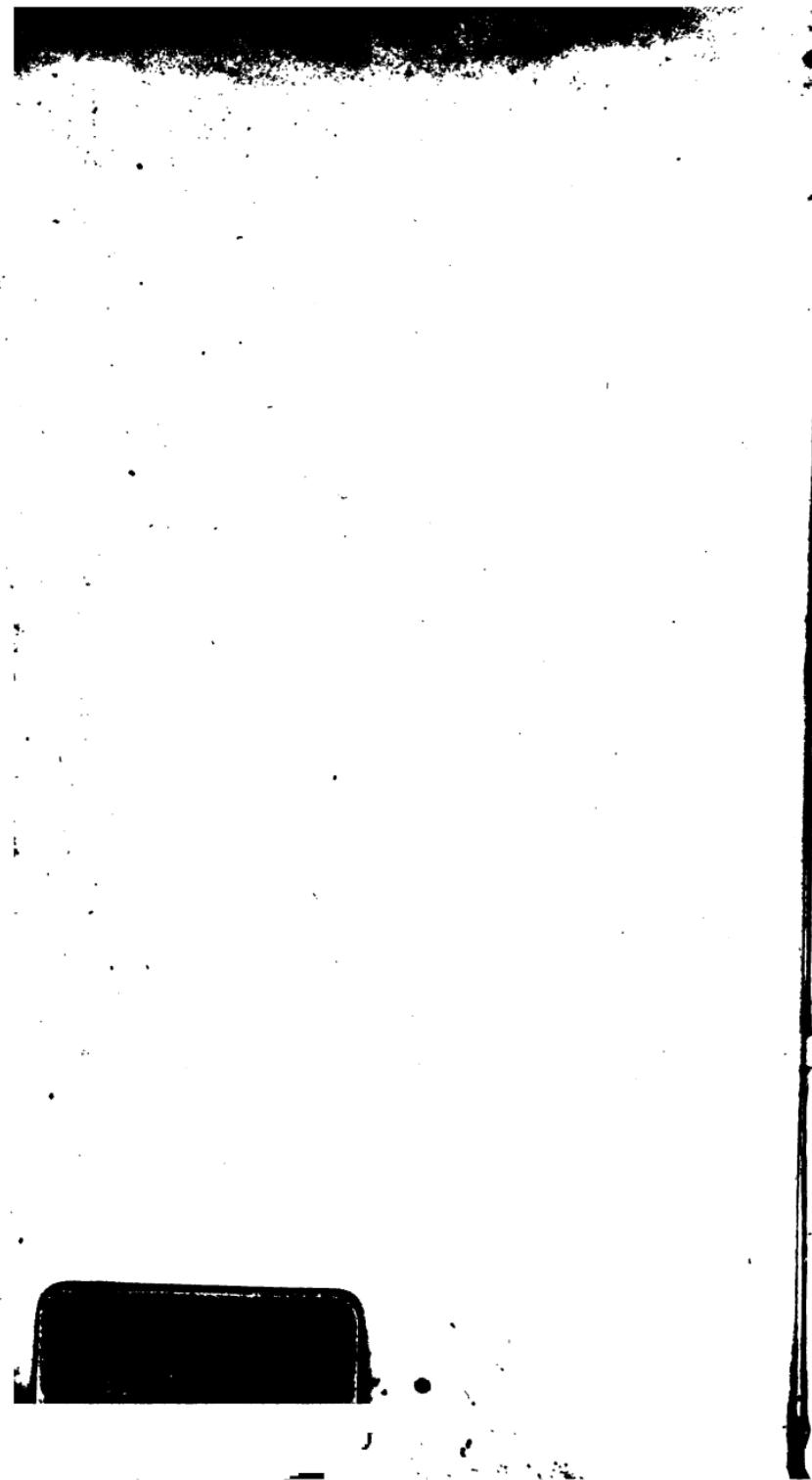
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FLAVEL'S
HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED,
NAVIGATION SPIRITUALIZED,
CAUSES AND CURE OF MENTAL ERRORS,
RISE AND GROWTH OF ANTONOMIAN ERRORS.

EDITED

BY THE REV. C. BRADLEY.



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HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED.



HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED;

OR THE

HEAVENLY USE OF EARTHLY THINGS.

BY

THE REV. JOHN FLAVEL.

ABRIDGED BY THE REV. C. BRADLEY.



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OR

JOHN FLAVEL.

JOHN FLAVEL was born in Worcestershire, about the year 1627. He was religiously educated by his father, and, after having attended a grammar-school, became a commoner of University College, Oxford. Here he was much respected for his piety and learning; and, though but young, was soon recommended as a person duly qualified to become assistant minister to an aged clergyman, the rector of Deptford in Devonshire. He was soon afterwards regularly ordained, and at the incumbent's death succeeded to the rectory.

In this situation he applied himself with the greatest zeal and diligence to his studies and ministerial labors, and gained much of the affection of his people by his disinterestedness in relinquishing a considerable part of his income, in order, as he declared, that "he might have no incumbrances or distractions from the world to hinder his spiritual work." But the eminence and reputation he attained by his exemplary conduct at Deptford, were the means of removing him from this charge in 1656. The neighbouring and populous town of Dartmouth had just lost its minister, and the people were in some danger of divisions and dissents, especially as they could not agree in approving of any one of the candidates for the

vacant office. They therefore sent Flavel a pressing invitation to become their minister ; and he, after much prayer and deliberation, thinking it to be his duty to comply, was prevailed upon to remove to Dartmouth, though the stipend was considerably less than he had received at Deptford.

In 1662, after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, he was ejected with the rest of the nonconformists ; but he still took every opportunity of preaching and administering the Sacraments to his flock privately, not considering himself discharged from the care of their souls, because he had been deprived of his living. At first these meetings were not attended with much risk, but after the Oxford Act, which prohibited all nonconformists to approach nearer than the distance of five miles from any corporate town, it was no longer safe for him to remain in Dartmouth, or even to visit his congregation there. This faithful servant of God, however, could not be induced to be idle, when aware that his exertions were needed ; and he often secretly entered Dartmouth, to teach and exhort some of his former congregation, though with much danger, because he was watched by many of his enemies. Once he was attacked by the mob as he was preaching in a wood within three miles of Exeter, but by the care of his hearers made his escape, and preached to them in another wood, without any disturbance. In London also he narrowly escaped being taken. He afterwards returned to Dartmouth, and here for some time was confined a close prisoner to his house. Such were the troubles he endured for more than twenty years ; but after this time it pleased God to restore him to his public usefulness, by the repeal

of the penal statutes under which he had suffered. He now labored with redoubled diligence; and even when his health and strength were unequal to his duties, he would not allow himself to relax. It seems probable that his end was in some degree hastened by his exertions, as he survived only four years after resuming his ministerial functions. He died at Exeter, in 1691.

Flavel was a man of exemplary piety and deep learning; full of life and activity, but yet thoughtful and disposed to meditation. As a preacher he seems to have been peculiarly fervent and impressive, and several very remarkable instances are recorded of the success of his ministry. He had a large fund of suitable materials for his sermons, having applied himself with unwearyed assiduity both to divine and human learning, and possessing so ready a flow of eloquence that he was never at a loss for words on any occasion. This too was very conspicuous in his prayers; and those who lived in his family have said, that “in prayer he seemed constantly to exceed himself, and rarely made use twice of the same expressions.” His whole life showed his great affection for the people of his charge; and this did not abate, though it was by no means always worthily returned. They once burned his effigy, after having carried it through the streets in derision; but when he heard of this, as one of his biographers says, “He lifted up his prayer unto God for them in our Saviour’s words, ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’”

Flavel’s works are chiefly practical. He was averse to controversies, and was much grieved when, upon one or two occasions, he was obliged to write against some errors

that appeared among the nonconformists. He declared to his friends that though the study of disputed doctrines was necessary, he took no pleasure in it, but had rather be employed in practical divinity. The state of mind in which he wrote appears to have been eminently that of one anxious for the good of others, and not his own reputation.

LIST
OF
FLAVEL'S WORKS.

- I. A Treatise of the Soul of Man.
- II. The Fountain of Life.
- III. The Method of Grace.
- IV. England's Duty.
- V. A Token for Mourners.
- VI. Husbandry Spiritualized.
- VII. Navigation Spiritualized.
- VIII. Sacramental Meditations.
- IX. The Causes and Cure of Mental Errors.
- X. The Saint Indeed.

Besides several Treatises and Sermons.

HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

On the Industry of the Husbandman.

Observation.—THE employment of the husbandman is by all acknowledged to be very laborious. There is a multiplicity of business incumbent on him. The end of one work is but the beginning of another. Every season of the year brings its proper work with it. Sometimes you find him in his fields, dressing, plowing, sowing, harrowing, weeding, or reaping; and sometimes in his barn, threshing or winnowing; sometimes in his orchard, planting, grafting, or pruning his trees; and sometimes among his cattle; so that he has no time to be idle.

As he has a multiplicity of business, so every part of it is full of toil and labor. He eats not the bread of idleness, but earns it before he eats it; whereby it becomes the sweeter to him.

Application.—Behold here the life of a serious Christian shadowed forth. As the life of a husbandman, so the life of a Christian is no idle or easy life. They that take up religion for ostentation, and not for an occupation, and they that place the business of it in notions and idle speculations, in forms, gestures, and external observances, may think and call it so; but such as devote themselves to it, and make religion their business, will find it no easy work to exercise themselves unto godliness. Many there are that affect the reputation of it, who cannot endure the

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labor of it. If men might be indulged to divide their heart betwixt God and the world, or to cull out the cheap and easy duties of it, and neglect the more difficult and costly ones, it were an easy thing to be a Christian: but surely to have a respect to all God's commandments, to live the life, as well as speak the language, of a Christian; to be holy in all manner of conversation, is not so easy. This will be evident, by comparing the life of a Christian with the life of a husbandman, in these five particulars; wherein it will appear, that the work of a Christian is by much the harder work of the two—

1. The husbandman has much to do, many things to look after; but the Christian more. If we respect the extensiveness of his work, he has a large field indeed to labor in. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad," of a vast extent and latitude, comprising not only a multitude of external acts and duties, and guiding the conduct of the outward man, but also taking in every thought and motion of the inner man within its compass.

You find in the word, much work cut out for a Christian. There is hearing-work, praying-work, reading, meditating, and self-examining-work. It puts him also upon a constant watch over all the corruptions of his heart. O what work do they occasion him! Of them he may say, as the historian says of Hannibal, they are never quiet, whether conquering or conquered. How many weak, languishing graces, has he to recover, improve, and strengthen! There is a weak faith, a languishing love, dull and faint desires, to be quickened and invigorated. And when all this is done, what a multitude of work do his several relations exact from him! He has much business incumbent on him, as a parent, child, husband, wife, master, servant, or friend. And besides all this, how many difficult things are there to be borne and suffered for Christ! And yet God will not allow his people to neglect any one of them. Neither can he be a Christian that has not respect to every command, and is not holy in all manner of conversation. Every one of these duties, like the several spokes in a wheel, come to bear, in the whole round of a Christian's conversation; so that he has more work upon his hands than the husbandman.

2. The husbandman's work is confessed to be spending work, but not like the Christian's. What Augustus said of the young Roman, is verified in the true Christian, "Whatsoever he does, he does to purpose. Under the law, God rejected the snail and the ass, Lev. vi. 30; Exod. xiii. 13; and under the gospel, he allows no sluggish lazy professor, 1 Tim. v. 11. Sleepy duties are utterly unsuitable to the living God; he will have the spirit offered up to him in every duty; John iv. 24. He bestows upon his people the very substance and kernel of mercies, and will not accept from them the shells and shadows of duties. Observe the manner in which their work is to be performed—in serving God, "fervent in spirit," Rom. xii. 11—in securing salvation diligent, or doing it thoroughly and enough, 2 Pet. i. 10—in godliness, exercising or stripping themselves, as for a race, 1 Tim. iv. 7—in the pursuit of happiness, striving even to an agony, Luke xiii. 24—in prayer, serving God instantly, or in a stretched out manner; yea, pouring out their hearts before him, Psal. lxii. 8; as if the body were left like a dead corpse upon the knees, whilst the spirit is departed from it, and ascended to God. This is the manner of his work: judge then how much harder this work is, than to spend the sweat of the brow in manual labor.

3. The husbandman finds his work as he left it; he can begin one day where he left off the other; but it is not so with the Christian; a bad heart and a busy devil disorder and spoil his work every day. The Christian finds not his heart in the morning, as he left it at night; and even when he is about his work, how many set-backs does he meet with? Satan stands at his right hand to resist him; when he would do good, evil, the evil of his own heart and nature, is present with him.

4. The husbandman has some resting-days, when he throws aside all his work, and takes his recreation; but the Christian has no resting-day, till his dying-day; and then he shall rest from his labors. Religion allows no idle day, "but requires him to be always abounding in the work of the Lord:" when one duty is done, another calls for him. The Lord's day is a day of rest to the husbandman, but no day in the week so laborious to the

Christian. O it is a spending day to him ! When he has gathered in the crop of one duty, he is not to sit down satisfied therewith, or say as that rich worldling did, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years;" but must to plow again, and count it well if the vintage reach to the seed-time, Lev. xxvi. 5. I mean, if the strength, influence, and comfort of one duty, hold out to another duty ; and that it may be so, and there be no room left for idleness, God has appointed ejaculatory prayer, to fill up the intervals, betwixt stated and more solemn duties. These are to keep in the fire which kindled the morning sacrifice, to kindle the evening sacrifice. When can the Christian sit down and say, "Now all my work is ended; I have nothing to do without doors, or within?"

5. There is a time when the labor of husbandmen is ended ; old age and weakness takes them off from all employment. They can look only upon their laborers, but cannot do a stroke of work themselves. They can tell you what they did in their younger years, but "Now," say they, "we must leave it to younger people; we cannot be young always." But the Christian is never superannuated as to the work of religion ; yea, the longer he lives, the more his Master expects from him. When he is full of days, God expects he should be full of fruits, "They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing," Psal. xcii. 14.

Reflections.—1. How hard have I labored for the meat that perisheth ! prevented the dawning of the day, and labored as in the very fire ! And yet is the Christian's work harder than mine ? Surely then I never yet understood the work of Christianity. Alas, my sleepy prayers, and formal duties, even all that ever I performed in my life, never cost me the pains, that one hour at plow has done. I have either wholly neglected, or, at best, so lazily performed, religious duties, that I may truly say, I offer to God what costs me nothing. Wo is me, poor wretch ! How is the judgment of Korah spiritually executed upon me ! The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up his body; but it has opened her mouth and swallowed up my heart, my time, and all my affections. How far am I from the kingdom of God !

2. And how little better is my case, who have indeed professed religion, but never made it my business! Will an empty, though splendid, profession save me? How many brave ships have perished in the storms, notwithstanding their fine names, the Prosperous, the Success, the Happy Return! A fine name could not protect them from the rocks; nor will it save me from hell. I have done by religion, as I should have done by the world; prayed, as if I prayed not; and heard, as if I heard not. I have given to God but the shadow of duty, and can never expect from him a real reward.

3. How unlike a Christian dost thou also, O my soul, go about thy work! though upright in the main, yet how little zeal and activity dost thou express in thy duties! Awake love and zeal. Seest thou not the toil and pains men take for the world? How do they prevent the dawning of the day; and labor as in the very fire till night! and all this for a trifle! Should not every drop of sweat which I see trickle from their brows, fetch, as it were, a drop of blood from my heart, who am thus convinced and reproved of shameful laziness, by their indefatigable diligence? Do they pant after the dust of the earth? And shall not I pant after God? Ah, my soul, it was not wont to be so with thee in the days of my first profession. Should I have had no more communion with God in duties then, it would have broken my heart: I should have been weary of my life. Is this a time for one to stand idle, who stands at the door of eternity? What, now slack-handed, when so near to thy everlasting rest? Or hast thou found the work of God so unpleasant to thee? or the trade of godliness so unprofitable? Or knowest thou not, that millions, now in hell, perished for want of serious diligence in religion? Or dost thou forget that thy Master's eye is always upon thee, whilst thou art loitering? Or would the damned live at this rate as I do, if their day of grace might be recalled? For shame, my soul, for shame! Rouse up thyself, and fall to thy work, with a diligence answerable to the weight thereof; for it is no vain work, it is thy life.

CHAPTER II.

On the Thriftiness of the Husbandman.

Observation.—INDUSTRY is the way to thrive and grow rich in the world. The earth must be manured, or its increase is in vain expected. “The diligent soul shall be made fat.” Solomon has two proverbs concerning thriftiness and increase in the world. In Prov. x. 4, he says, “The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” And in ver. 22, he says, “The blessing of the Lord maketh rich.” These are not contradictory, but confirmatory of each other; one speaks of the principal, the other of the instrumental, cause. Diligence without God’s blessing will not do it; and that blessing cannot be expected without diligence. Husbandmen therefore ply their business with unwearied pains; they even lodge in the midst of their labors, as that good man Boaz did, Ruth ii. 3. They are parsimonious of their time, but prodigal of their strength, because they find this to be the thriving way.

Application.—As nature opens her treasures to none but the diligent, so neither does grace. He that will be a rich, must be a painful, Christian; and whosoever will closely ply the trade of godliness, shall comfortably and quickly find, “that in keeping God’s commands there is great reward.” God is a “bountiful rewarder of such as diligently seek him.” They must not indeed work for wages, nor yet will God suffer their work to go unrewarded; yea, it sufficiently rewards itself, 1 Tim. vi. 6. And its reward is twofold—present, and in part—future, and in full; Mark x. 29, 30; now in this time a hundred-fold, even from suffering, which seems the most unprofitable part of the work, and in the world to come life everlasting. If you ask what present advantage Christians have by their diligence? I answer, as much and more than the husbandman has from all his toils and labors. Let us compare the particulars, and see what the husbandman gets that the Christian gets not also. Compare your gains, and you will quickly see the difference.

1. You get credit and reputation by your diligence; it

is a commendation and honor to you to be active and stirring men: but how much more honor does God put upon his laborious servants? It is the highest honor of a creature to be active and useful for its God. Saints are called "vessels of honor," as they are fitted for the Master's use. Wherein consists the honor of angels but in this, that they are ministering spirits, serviceable creatures? And all the apostles gloried in the title of servants. The lowest office in which a man can serve God, even that of Nethinim, or door-keepers, which was the lowest order or rank of officers in the house of God, is yet preferred by David before the service of the greatest prince on earth. It is no small honor to be active for God.

2. You have this benefit by your labor, that thereby you avoid loose and evil company, which would draw you into mischief. By diligence for God, the Christian also is secured from temptation, "God is with them while they are with him," 2 Chron. xv. 2. Communion with God in the way of duty is a great preservative against temptations. The schoolmen put the question, how the angels and glorified saints become impeccant? and resolve it thus—that they are secured from sin by the beatified vision; and sure I am that the visions of God, not only in glory, but now also in duty, are marvellous defences against sin; and they who are most active for God, have the fullest and clearest visions of God, John xiv. 21.

3. You have this benefit by your labor, that it tends much to the health of your bodies. The Christian has this benefit by his labor, that it tends to a healthful state of soul. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright," Prov. x. 29. As those that follow their daily labors in the field, have much more health than citizens that live idly, or scholars that live a sedentary life, so the active Christian enjoys more spiritual health, and is troubled with fewer complaints, than others.

4. By diligence in your civil employments, you preserve your estates, and are kept from running behind-hand in the world. And by activity and diligence for God, souls are kept from backsliding, and running back in their graces and comforts. Remissness and intermission in our duties are the first steps and degrees, by which a soul declines and wastes as to its spiritual estate.

5. Your pains and diligence in the fields, make your bed sweet to you at night. "Rest is sweet to a laboring man, whether he eat little or much." But the diligent life of a Christian makes the clods of the valley, his grave, sweet unto him. Think, Christian, how sweet it will be for thee when thou comest to die, to say then as thy Redeemer did, when near his death, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self."

6. Your industry fills your purses; you get estates by your diligence and labor; but what are your gains to the gains of Christians? They can get in an hour that which they will not part with for all the gold and silver on earth.

So that compare these laborers, as to all their advantages, and you will see, that there is no trade like that which the diligent Christian drives.

Reflections.—1. Blush then, O my soul, at the consideration of thy laziness and sloth, which is attended with so many spiritual wants. And can I wonder at my spiritual poverty, when I refuse the painful way of duty, in which the precious fruits of godliness are only to be found? If the fruits lie upon the surface of duty, or could be had with wishes, I should not want them; but to dig deep and take pains I cannot. My desires, like those of the slothful man, kill me, because my hands refuse to labor, Prov. xxi. 25. If every duty were to be rewarded presently with gold, should I not have been more assiduous in them, than I have been? And yet I know that a heart full of the grace and comfort of the Holy Ghost, is better than a house full of gold and silver. O what a composition of stupidity and sloth am I! I have been for some short way to comfort, when constant experience teaches, that the further way about, by painful duty, is the nearer way to it. What pains do husbandmen take! What peril do seamen run for a little gain! O sluggish heart, wilt thou do nothing for eternal treasures?

2. If there be such great reward attending diligence in duty, then why art thou so apt, O my soul, to cast off duty, because thou findest not present comfort in it? How quickly am I discouraged, if I presently find not what I expect in duty! Whereas the well is deep, and much pains

must be taken to draw up those waters of joy. There is a golden vein in the mount of duty, but it lies deep; and because I meet not with it as soon as I expect, my lazy heart throws by the shovel, and cries, "Dig I cannot."

3. If this be indeed the rich and thriving trade, why do I busy myself about the poor low things of the world so much, neglecting the rich trade of godliness for it? O how much of my time and strength have these things devoured! Had I employed that time in communion with God, would it not have turned to a better account? Thinkest thou in earnest, O my soul, that God has endowed thee with such excellent faculties, capable of the most divine and heavenly employments, or that Jesus Christ has shed his invaluable, precious blood, or that he has sent forth the glorious Spirit of holiness; and all this to fit men for no higher, no nobler employments, than these. Is this the end of thy wonderful creation? Does God whirl about the heavens in endless revolutions, to beget time for this? Or does he not rather expect that the weightiest work should engross thy greatest strength, and choicest hours? O that I could once consider, what a good Master Christians serve, who will not only abundantly reward them at night, but brings them their food into the fields to encourage them in their labor! What pity is it, that so good a Master should be so badly served as God has been by me!

CHAPTER III.

On the Cheerfulness of the Husbandman.

Observation.—THOUGH the labors of the husbandman are very great and toilsome, yet with what cheerfulness do they go through them! It is very delightful to hear the melody they make, by whistling, as they follow the plow; yea, the very horses have their bells, which make a pleasant noise. I have been often delighted with this country music, whereby they sweeten their hard labors with an innocent pleasure.

Application.—But how much greater cause have the people of God to address themselves unto his work with all cheerfulness of spirit ? And, indeed, so far as the heart is spiritual, it delights in its duties. It is true, the work of a Christian is painful, and much more laborious than the husbandman's, but then it as much exceeds in the delights and pleasures that attend it. What is the Christian's work, but “with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation ?” You may see what a pleasant path the path of duty is, by the cheerfulness of those who have walked in it; “I have rejoiced in the way of thy judgments, as much as in all riches;”—and by the promises that are made to such; “Yea, they sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord ;” and again, “You shall have a song as in the night, when an holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart; as when one goeth with a pipe, to come to the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel,” Isa. xxx. 29 ;—and by the many commands, whereby joy in the way of the Lord is made the duty of the saints ; “Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright.” “Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice,” Phil. iv. 4 ; here the command is doubled, yea, not only simple rejoicing, but the highest degree of that duty comes within the command. In Luke vii. 22, the disciples are bid “to leap for joy,” when about the most difficult part of their work. And that you may see there is a sufficient ground for this joy, and that it is not like the mad mirth of sinners, consider, first, the nature of the work about which Christians are employed. It is the most excellent and heavenly employment that ever souls were acquainted with. O what a ravishing and delightful thing it is to walk with God ! And yet by this, the whole work of a Christian is expressed, Gen. xvii. 1. Can any life compare with this, for pleasure ? Can they be cold, that walk in the sunshine ? or sad, that abide in the fountain of all delights ; and walk with him whose name is the God of all comfort ; “in whose presence is the fulness of joy ?” O what an angelic life does a Christian then live !

Consider, secondly, the suitableness of this work to a regenerate soul. Is it any pain for a bird to fly, or a fish to swim ? Is the eye tired with beautiful objects, or the

ear with melodious sounds ? As little can a spiritual soul be wearied with spiritual and heavenly exercises. "I delight in the law of God after the inner man," Rom. vii. 22. A saint can sit from morning to night to hear discourses of the love and loveliness of Jesus Christ. The sight of your thriving flocks and flourishing fields, cannot yield you that pleasure which an upright soul can find in one quarter of an hour's communion with God. "They that are after the flesh," says the apostle, "do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." But then look how much heavenly objects transcend earthly ones, and how much the soul is more capable of delight in those objects, than the gross and duller senses are in theirs ? So much does the pleasure arising from duty excel all sensitive delights on earth.

Reflections.—How am I cast and condemned by this, may I say, who never savored this spiritual delight in holy duties ! When I am about my earthly employments, I can go on unweariedly from day to day; all the way is down-hill to my nature, and the wheels of my affections being oiled with carnal delight, run so fast, that they have need most times of being checked. Here I need the curb rather than the spur. O how fleet and nimble are my spirits in these their pursuits ! But O what a slug am I in religious duties ! Surely if my heart were renewed by grace, I should delight in the law of God. All the world is alive in their ways; every creature enjoys his proper pleasure; and is there no delight to be found in the paths of holiness ? Is godliness only a dry root that bears no pleasant fruits ? No, there are doubtless incomparable pleasures to be found therein ; but such a carnal heart as mine savors them not.

I cannot say, the hypocrite may tell us, but I have found delight in religious duties, but they have been only such as rather sprang from the ostentation of gifts and applauses of men than any sweet and real communion I have had with God through them; they have rather proved food and fuel to my pride, than food to my soul. Like the nightingale, I can sing sweetly, when I observe others listen to me and are affected with my music. O

false, deceitful heart, such delight as this will end in howling! Were my spirit right, it would as much delight in retirement for the enjoyment of God, as it does in those duties that are most exposed to the observation of man. Will such a spring as this maintain a stream of affections, when carnal motives fail? What wilt thou answer, O my soul! to that question in Job xxvii. 9, 10; "Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" What wilt thou reply to this question? Deceive not thou thyself, O my soul. Thou wilt doubtless be easily persuaded to let go that thou never delightedst in, and from an hypocrite in religion, quickly become an apostate from religion.

From all this the upright heart takes advantage to rouse up its delight in God, and thus it expostulates with itself—Does the plowman sing amidst his drudging labors, and whistle away his weariness in the fields? and shall I droop amidst such heavenly employment? O my soul, what wantest thou here to provoke thy delight? If there be such an affection as delight in thee, methinks such an object as the blessed face of God in ordinances should excite it. Ah, how would this ennable all my services, and make them angel-like! How glad are those blessed creatures to be employed for God! No sooner were they created, but they sang together, and shouted for joy. How did they fill the air with heavenly melody, when sent to bring the joyful tidings of a Saviour to the world, ascribing glory to God in the highest, even to the highest of their powers. Yea, this delight would make all my duties Christ-like; and the nearer they are to that pattern, the more excellent. He delighted to do his Father's will; it was to him meat and drink.

Yea, it would not only ennable, but facilitate all my duties, and be to me as wings to a bird in flying, or sails to a ship in motion. "Or ever I was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Amminabid." O what is the reason, my God, that my delight in thee should be so little? Is it not because my unbelief is so great? Rouse up my delights, O thou fountain of pleasure! and let me swim down the stream of holy joy in duty, into the boundless

ocean of those immense delights that are in thy presence,
and at thy right hand for evermore.

CHAPTER IV.

On the due Quality of Arable Land.

Observation.—HUSBANDMEN find by experience, that their arable lands may be dressed too much, as well as too little. If the soil be over-rank, the seed shoots up so much into the stalk, that it seldom ears well; and if too thin and poor, it wants its due nutriment, and comes not to perfection. Therefore their care is, to keep it in heart, but not to over-dress or under-dress it. The end of all their cost and pains about it is fruit; and therefore reason tells them, that such a state and temperament of it, as best fits it for fruit, is best both for it and them.

Application.—And does not spiritual experience teach Christians, that a mediocrity and competency of the things of this life, best fit them for the fruits of obedience, which are the end and excellency of their being? A man may be over-mercied, as well as over-afflicted. When our outward enjoyments are by Providence fitted to our condition, we cannot desire a better condition in this world. This was it that wise Agur requested of God, “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain,” Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Against both he prays equally, not absolutely; that had been his sin; he prays comparatively, and submissively to the will of God. He had rather, if God see it fit, avoid both of these extremes; but what would he have then? Food convenient; or, according to the Hebrew, his prey or statute-bread; which is a metaphor from birds which fly up and down to prey for their young, and what they get they distribute among them; they bring them enough to preserve their lives, but not more than enough, to lie inouldering

Div.

No. XVI.

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in the nest. Such a proportion Agur desired, and the reason why he desired it is drawn from the danger of both extremes. He measured, like a wise Christian, the convenience or inconvenience of his estate in the world, by its suitableness or unsuitableness to the end of his being, which is the service of his God. He accounted the true excellence of his life to consist in its reference and tendency to the glory of his God ; and he could not see how a redundancy, or too great a penury, of earthly comforts could fit him for that ; but a middle estate, equally removed from both extremes, best fitted that end. And this was all that good Jacob, who was led by the same Spirit, looked at, " And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God," Gen. xxviii. 20. Poor Jacob, he desires no great things in the world ; food and raiment will satisfy him. In spiritual matters his desires are boundless ; he is the most unsatisfied man in the world, Hos. xii. 4 ; but in the matters of this life, if he can get from God but a morsel of meat and a mouthful of water, he will not envy the richest Croesus or Crassus upon earth. Such a state is best accommodated both to the condition and to the desires of a saint—to his condition, for what is a saint but a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, a man in a strange country travelling homeward ? So David professed himself ; and so those worthies, who are now at home in heaven, professed themselves. A *viaticum* contents a traveller ; he will not encumber himself with superfluous things, which would rather clog and tire, than expedite and help, him in his journey.—It suits best with his desires ; I mean his regular and advised desires. For, first, a gracious soul earnestly desires a free condition in the world. He is sensible he has much work to do, a race to run, and is loth to be clogged, or have his foot in the snare of the cares or pleasures of this life. It is hard, in the midst of so many tempting objects, to keep the golden bridle of moderation upon the affections. The heart of a Christian, like the moon, commonly suffers an eclipse when it is at the full, and that by the interposition of the earth.

It was Solomon's fulness that brought him to so low an ebb in spiritual things, that it remains a question with some, whether he ever recovered it to his dying day. As it is the misery of the poor to be neglected by men, so it is the misery of the rich to neglect God. Who can be poorer than to have the world and love it? or riches, than to enjoy but little of it, and live above it?

And on the other side, extreme poverty is no less exposed to sin and danger; Lev. vi. 2. As high and lofty trees are subject to storms and tempests, so the lower shrubs to be browsed on by every beast; and therefore a saint desires a competency as the fittest, because the freest, state.

A gracious person desires no more than a competency, because, secondly, there is most of God's love and care discovered in giving in our daily bread, by a daily providence. It is betwixt such a condition and a fulness of provisions in our land, as it was betwixt Egypt and Canaan; Egypt was watered with the flood from the river Nile, and little of God was seen in that mercy; but Canaan depended upon the dews and showers of heaven, and so every shower of rain was a refreshing shower to their souls, as well as bodies. Most men, who have a stock of creature-comforts in their hands, look upon all as coming in an ordinary, natural course, and see very little of God in their mercies. Pope Adrian built a college at Louvain, and caused this inscription to be written in letters of gold on the gates thereof, "Utrecht planted me, Louvain watered me, and Cesar gave the increase." One, to reprove his folly, wrote underneath, "God did nothing here." Carnal men sow, and reap, and eat, and look no further.

But when a man sees his mercies come in by the special and assiduous care of God for him, there is a double sweetness in those mercies. The natural sweetness which comes from the creature itself, every one, even the beasts, can taste; but besides that, there is a spiritual sweetness, far exceeding the former, which none but a believer tastes; and much of that comes from the manner in which he receives it, because it comes, be it never so coarse or little, as a covenant mercy to him. "He hath given bread to them that fear him; he is ever mindful of his cove-

nant." Luther, who made many a meal upon a broiled herring, was wont to say, " Let us be content with coarse fare here; have we not the bread that came down from heaven? Do we not feed with angels?" An instance of the sweetness of such mercies is given us by a worthy divine of our own, Isaac Ambrose, " For my own part" says he, " however the Lord hath seen cause to give me but a poor pittance of outward things, for which I bless his name, yet in the income thereof, I have many times observed so much of his peculiar providence, that thereby they have been very much sweetened, and my heart hath been raised to admire his grace." " Your God, who hath given you a heart thankfully to record your experiences of his goodness, doth renew experiences for your encouragement." " One morsel of God's provision, especially if it come unexpected, and upon prayer, when wants are most, will be more sweet to a spiritual relish, than all former full enjoyments were."

Many mercies come unasked for, and they require thankfulness; but when mercies come in upon prayer, and as a return of prayer, their sweetness is more than doubled; for now it is both God's blessing upon his own institution, and a seal set to his promise at once. Doubtless Hannah found more comfort in her Samuel, and Leah in her Naphtali, the one being asked of God, and the other wrestled for with God, than mothers ordinarily do in their children.

Reflections.—Do the people of God, the designing hypocrite may say, desire only so much of the creature as may fit them for the service of God? What a wretch am I, that have desired only so much of religion as may fit all to gain the creature! As God's people have subjected me their creature-enjoyments to religion, so, O my soul, thou hast subjected religion to thy worldly interest and designs. Instead of eating and drinking to serve God, I have served God that I might eat and drink; yea, I have not only acted below religion, but below reason also; for reason dictates plainly, that the means must never be more excellent than the end. Wretch that I am, to make religion a slave to my lust, a stirrup to advancement, an artifice to carry on my carnal designs! Verily I have my reward; and this is all the good I am ever like to get by it.

And no less should the worlding tremble, to consider how he has cast off the duties of religion, made them stand aside, and give place to the world. Instead of desiring so much only as might make him serviceable to God, he thrusts aside the service of God to get as much of the world as he can, who is so far from making godliness the end of his creature-comforts, that he rather looks upon it as an obstacle and hindrance to them. May not the very heathens make me blush? Could Aristotle deliver this as a true rule to posterity, to make religion our first and chief care? Could Aristippus say; he would rather neglect his means than his mind, his farm than his soul? Will the very Mahometans, how urgent soever their business be, lay it all aside five times in the day to pray? And yet I, who profess myself a Christian, thrust out duty for every trifle! O wretched soul, how has the god of this world blinded mine eyes! Can the world indeed do that for me that Christ can do? Has it ever proved true to them that trusted it, and doated on it? O how righteous will that sentence of God be, "Go cry to the gods whom thou hast served!"

And may not many gracious hearts turn in upon themselves with shame and sorrow, to consider how unsatisfied they have been in that condition, which others have preferred and esteemed as the greatest of all outward mercies? I have indeed been fed with food convenient, but I am not contented. How has mine heart been tortured from day to day with anxious thoughts concerning what I shall eat and drink, and wherewith I and mine shall be clothed? I pretend indeed that I care but for a competency of the world, but sure I am, my cares about it have been incompetent. Come my distrustful earthly heart, let me propound a few questions to thee about this matter, and answer truly to what I shall demand of thee.

Quest. 1. Hast thou here a continuing city? Art thou at home, or upon thy journey, that thou art so solicitous about the world? Thy profession indeed speaks thee a stranger upon earth, but thy conversation a home-dweller. Erasmus said he desired honors and riches no more than a weary horse does a heavy cloak-back. Wouldst thou

not account him a fool that would victual his ship as much to cross the channel to France, as if she were bound for the East Indies ? Alas ! it will be but a little while, and then there will be no more need of any of these things. It is sad, that a soul which stands at the door of eternity, should be perplexing itself about food and raiment.

Quest. 2. Which of all the saints hast thou known to be the better for much of the world ? It has been some men's utter ruin. Where there is no want, there is usually much wantonness. What a sad story is that of Pius Quintus ! " When I was in a low condition," said he, " I had some comfortable hopes of my salvation ; but when I came to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted of it ; but since I came to the popedom, I have no hope at all." Though this poor undone wretch spake it out, and others keep it in ; yet, doubtless, there are many thousand in the world that might say as much, would they but speak the truth.

And even God's own people, though the world has not excluded them out of heaven, yet it has sorely clogged them in the way thither. Many who have been very humble, holy, and heavenly in a low condition, have suffered a sad ebb in a full condition. What a cold blast have they felt coming from the cares and delights of this life, to chill both their graces and comforts ! It had been well for some of God's people, if they had never known what prosperity meant.

Quest. 3. Is not this a sad symptom of a declining state of soul, to be so hot, eager, and anxious, about the superfluous trifles of this life ? Thinkest thou, O my soul, that one who walks in the view of the glory above, and maintains a conversation in heaven, can be much taken with these vanities ? Do not the visions of God veil the tempting splendor of the creature ? Lively and sweet communion with God, blunts and dulls the edge of the affections to earthly things ; and canst thou be satisfied, my soul, with such gains as are attended with such spiritual losses ?

Quest. 4. Is it not dishonorable to God, and a justification of the way of the world, for me, who profess my-

self a Christian, to be as eager after riches as other men? If I had no Father in heaven, nor promise in the world, it were another matter: but since my heavenly Father knows what I have need of, and has charged me to be careful in nothing, but only to tell him my wants, how unbecoming a thing is it in me to live and act as I have done! Let me henceforth learn to measure and estimate my condition, rather by its usefulness to God, than its content and ease to my flesh.

CHAPTER V.

On the Improvement of bad Ground.

Observation.—WHERE land is spent out by tillage for want of manuring, the careful husbandman has many ways to recover and bring it into heart again. He lets it lie fallow, to give it rest, and time to recover itself; carries out to it his sand, lime, and compost, to refresh and quicken it again; and in pasture and meadow ground, will wash it, if possible, with a current of water. He cuts down and kills the weeds that suck it out, and causes them to make restitution of what they have purloined from it, by rotting upon the place where they grew. As careful are they to recover it, when it is spent, as an honest physician is of his patient in a languishing condition; for he knows his field will be as grateful to him, and fully requite his care and cost.

Application.—As man's, so God's husbandry, is sometimes out of case, not by yielding too many crops, but too few. The mystical husbandman has some fields, (I mean particular societies and persons, who were once fragrant and fruitful like a field) which he once blessed, but they are now decayed and grown barren; their gleanings formerly were more than their vintage now; the things that are in them are ready to die. It is possible, yea, too common for gracious souls to be reduced to a very low ebb, both of graces

and comforts ; how low I will not say. Our British divines tell us, that grace indeed cannot be totally intermitted, nor finally lost ; but there may be an omission of the act, even though there be not an omission of the habit. Certain it is, one that, like Paul, has been transported with joy, even to the third heavens, and cried, “ I am more than a conqueror ; who shall separate me from the love of Christ ? ” may, at another time lie mourning, as at the gates of death, crying, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” One that has walked in sweet communion with God, rejoicing in the light of his countenance, may afterwards “ walk in darkness, and see no light.” He who has cast anchor within the veil, and rode securely in the peaceful harbour of assurance, may seem to feel his anchor of hope lost, and go adrift into the stormy ocean again, crying with the church, “ My hope is perished from the Lord.” His calm and clear air may be overcast and clouded, yea, filled with storms and tempests, lightnings and thunders. His graces, like under-ground flowers in the winter, may all disappear, and hide their beautiful heads. To God he may say, “ I am cast out of thy sight. I know thou canst do much, but wilt thou show wonders to the dead ? ” To the promises he may say, “ You are sweet things indeed, but what have I to do with you ? I could once, indeed, rejoice in you, as my portion ; but now I fear that I grasped a shadow, a fancy, instead of you.” To saints he may say, “ Turn away from me ; labor not to comfort me. O do not spill your precious ointment of consolation upon my head ; for what have I to do with comfort ? ” To former experiences he may say in his haste, “ You are all liars.” To the light of God’s countenance he may say, “ Farewell, sweet light. I shall behold thee no more.” To Satan he may say, “ O mine enemy, thou hast at last prevailed against me ; thou art stronger than I, and hast overcome.” To duties and ordinances he may say, “ Where is the sweetness I once found in you ? You were once sweeter to me than the honey-comb ; but now tasteless.” O sad relapse ! deplorable change !

But will God leave his poor creatures helpless in such

a case as this? Shall their leaf fall, their branches wither, their joy, their life, their hearts depart? Will he see their graces fainting, their hopes expiring, the things that are in them ready to die, and will he not regard it? He will regard it. "There is hope of a tree if it be cut down, and the root thereof wax old in the earth, yet by the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant," Job xiv. 8. This poor declining soul, though it sit thus sad at the gates of hell, may rouse up itself at last, and say to Satan, who stands triumphing over it, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me," Micah vii. 8. He may raise up himself upon the bed of languishing, and say to God, "Though thou hast chastened me sore, yet hast thou not given me over unto death." He may turn about to the saints who have mourned for him, and with a lightsome countenance say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." He may say to the promises, "You are the true and faithful sayings of God. My unbelief did belie you; I said in my haste you were liars, but I am ashamed of my folly. Surely, O soul, there is yet hope in thine end; thou mayest be restored; thou mayest yet recover thy verdure, and thy dew be as the dew of herbs." For,

1. Is he not thy father, and a father full of compassion? And can a father stand by his dying child, see his faintings, hear his melting groans and pity-begging looks, and not help him, especially having restoratives by him, that can do it? Surely "as a father pities his own children, so will thy God pity thee," "He will spare thee as a father spareth his own son that serves him." Hark, how his bowels yearn! "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, I will surely have mercy on him," Jer. xxxi. 20.

2. Does he not know that thy life would be altogether useless to him, if he should not restore thee? What service art thou fit to perform for him in such a condition? "Thy days will consume like smoke, whilst thy heart

is smitten and withered like grass." Thy months will be months of vanity, they will fly away, and see no good. If he will but quicken thee again, then thou mayest call upon his name; but in a dead and languishing condition thou art no more fit for any work of God, than a sick man is for manual labors; and surely he has not put those precious and excellent graces of the Spirit within thee for nothing; they were planted there for fruit and service, and therefore doubtless he will revive thee again.

3. Yea, dost thou not think that he sees thine inability to bear such a condition long? He knows "thy spirit would fail before him, and the soul which he hath made." David told him as much in the like condition; "Hear me speedily, O Lord, for my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto those that go down into the pit."

And in like manner Job expostulated with him; "My grief is heavier than the sand of the sea, my words are swallowed up, for the arrows of the Almighty are within me; and the poison thereof drinks up my spirits. The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. What is my strength that I should hope? Is my strength the strength of stones? or are my bones of brass?" Job vi. 1. Other troubles a man may, but this he cannot bear; and therefore, doubtless, seasonable and gracious revivings will come. "He will not stir up all his wrath, for he remembers thou art but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again," Psal. lxxvii. 38. He has ways enough to do it. If he do but unveil his blessed face, and make it shine again upon thee, thou art saved; Psal. lxxx. 3. The manifestations of his love, will be to thy soul, as showers to the parched grass; a new face shall come upon thy graces; they shall bud again, and blossom as a rose. Then shalt thou return to thy first works, and sing, as in the days of thy youth.

Reflections.—O this is my very case, says many a poor Christian. Thus my soul languishes and droops from day to day. It is good news indeed; that God both can and will restore my soul; but sad that I should fall into such a state. How unlike am I to what I once was!

Surely, as the old men wept when they saw how short the second temple came of the glory of the first, so may I sit down and weep bitterly, to consider how much my first love and first duties excelled the present. For,

1. Is my heart so much in heaven now, as it was wont to be? Say, O my soul, dost thou not remember, when, like the beloved disciple, thou laidst in the bosom of Jesus? How sweet was thy communion with him! How restless and impatient wast thou in his absence! What a burden was the world to me in those days! Had it not been for the sake of my duty, I could have been willing to neglect all, that communion with Christ might suffer no interruption. When I awoke in the night, how was the darkness enlightened by the heavenly glimpses of the countenance of my God upon me! How did his company shorten those hours, and beguile the tediousness of the night? O my soul, speak thy experience—is it now as it was then? No; those days are past and gone, and thou art become almost a stranger to that heavenly life. Art thou able with truth to deny this charge? When occasionally I pass by those places which were once to me as Jacob's Bethel to him, I sigh at the remembrance of former intercourse betwixt me and heaven there, and say with Job, "O that it were with me as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, when by his light I walked through darkness, when the Almighty was yet with me, when I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, when my glory was fresh in me! When I remember these things my soul is poured out within me."

2. Is my obedience to the commands of Christ as free and cheerful as it was wont to be? Call to mind, my soul, the times when thou wast borne down the stream of love to every duty. If the Spirit did but whisper to thee, saying, "Seek my face," how did my spirit echo to his calls, saying, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek!" If God had any work to be done, how readily did I offer my service! "Here am I, Lord, send me." My soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib; love oiled the wheels of my affections, and "his commandments were not grievous."

3. Tell me, O my soul, dost thou bemoan thyself, or grieve so tenderly for sin and for grieving the Holy Spirit of God, as thou wast wont to do? When formerly I had fallen by the hand of a temptation, how was I wont to lie in tears at the Lord's feet, bemoaning myself! How did I hasten to my closet, and there cry, like Ezra, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to look up unto thee!" How did I sigh and weep before him, and, like Ephraim, smite upon my thigh, saying, "What have I done!" Ah, my soul, how didst thou work and strive, to recover thyself again! Hast thou forgotten how thou wouldest sometimes look up and sigh bitterly! O what a God have I provoked! What love and goodness have I abused! What a good Spirit have I grieved! Ah, my soul, thou wouldest have abhorred thyself, thou couldst never have borne it, had thine heart been as stupid and as relentless then as now. If ever a poor soul had reason to dissolve itself into tears for its sad relapses, I have.

But yet mourn not, O my soul, as one without hope. Remember, "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." As low as thy condition is, it is not desperate; it is not a disease that scorns a remedy. Many a man who has been stretched out for dead, has revived again, and lived many a comfortable day in the world; many a tree that has cast both leaf and fruit, by the skill of a prudent husbandman, has recovered again, and been made both flourishing and fruitful. Is it not easier, thinkest thou, to recover a languishing man to health, than a dead man to life? And yet this God did for me. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? "Though my soul draw nigh to the pit, and my life to the destroyers, yet he can send me a messenger, one among a thousand, that shall declare to me my uprightness; then shall he deliver me from going down into the pit, my flesh shall be fresher than a child's, and I shall return to the days of my youth," Job xxxiii. 22. Though my freshness and much of my fruit too be gone, and I am a withering tree; yet as long as the root of the matter is in me, there is more hope of such a poor, decayed withered tree, than of the hypocrite that wants

such a root in all his glory and bravery. His sun shall set, and never rise again; but I live in expectation of a sweet morning after this dark night.

Rouse up, therefore, O my soul. Stir up that little which remains. Hast thou not seen lively flames proceed from glimmering and dying sparks? Get amongst the most lively and quickening Christians; "as iron sharpeneth iron," so will these set an edge upon thy dull affections. But, above all, cry mightily to the Lord for his quickening grace. He will not despise thy cry. The moans of a distressed child work upon the bowels of a tender father. And be sure to keep within thy view the great things of eternity, which are ready to be revealed; live in the believing and serious contemplation of them, and be dead if thou canst. It is true, thou hast reason enough from thy condition, to be for ever humbled, but no reason at all from thy God to be in the least discouraged.

CHAPTER VI.

On the incurableness of some bad Ground.

Observation.—ALTHOUGH the industry and skill of the husbandman can make some ground that was useless and bad, good for tillage and pasture, and improve that which was barren, and by his cost and pains make one acre worth ten; yet such is the nature of some rocky or miry ground, where the water stands and there is no way to cleanse it, that it can never be made fruitful. The husbandman is fain to let it alone, as an incurable piece of waste or worthless ground; and though the sun and clouds shed their influences on it, as well as upon better land, yet that does not at all mend it. Nay, the more showers it receives, the worse it proves. Nothing thrives there but worthless flags and rushes.

Application.—Many also there are, under the gospel, who are given over by God to judicial blindness, hard-

Div.

No. XVI.

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ness of heart, and perpetual barrenness; so that how excellent soever the means are which they enjoy, and how efficacious soever to the conversion, edification, and salvation of others, yet they never do their souls good. "Every thing wheresoever the river comes shall live, but the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof shall never be healed, but be given to salt;" given up to an obstinate and everlasting barrenness, Ezek. xlvi. 9, 11. This river is the most fruitful doctrine of Christ; yet these waters do not heal the miry, marshy places, that is, men that live unfruitfully under ordinances. O this is a sad case! and yet it is a very common one. Many persons are thus given over as incorrigible and hopeless. "Let him that is filthy be filthy still," Rev. xxii. 11. "Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them," Jer. vi. 29.

Christ executes, by the gospel, that curse upon many souls which he denounced against the fig-tree; "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever;" and immediately the fig-tree withered away. To be given up to such a condition, is a fearful judgment indeed, the sum of all miseries and judgments, a fatal stroke at the root itself. It is a wo to have a bad heart, but it is the depth of wo to have a heart that never shall be made better. To be barren under the gospel, is a sore judgment, but to have this pertinacious barrenness, is to be "twice dead and plucked up by the root."

To show you the woful and miserable state of such men, let the following particulars be weighed—

1. It is a stroke at the soul itself, an inward spiritual judgment; and by how much the more inward and spiritual any judgment is, by so much the more dreadful and lamentable is it. As soul mercies are the best mercies, so soul judgments are the saddest of all judgments. If it were but a stroke upon the body, the loss of an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot, though in itself it would be a considerable loss, yet it were nothing to this. Chrysostom, speaking of bodily members, says, "God has given men double members; two eyes, two hands, two ears, two feet, that the failing of one may be supplied by the help of the other; but he has given them only one soul;

if that perish, there is no other to supply its loss." "The soul," says the heathen Plato, "is the man; that which is seen, is not the man." The apostle calls the body a "vile body;" and so it is, compared with the soul; and Daniel calls it the sheath, which is but a contemptible thing to the sword in it. O it were far better that many bodies perish, than one soul; that every member were made the seat and subject of the most exquisite torture, than such a judgment should fall upon the soul.

2. It is the severest stroke God can inflict upon the soul in this life, to give it up to barrenness; because it cuts off all hopes, frustrates all means; nothing can be a blessing to him. If one should come from the dead, if angels should descend from heaven to preach to him, there is no hope of him. As there was none found in heaven or earth that could open the seals of that book; Rev. v. 5. so is there no opening by the hand of the most able and skilful ministry, those seals of hardness, blindness, and unbelief, thus impressed upon the spirit. Whom justice so locks up, mercy will never let out: This is that which makes up the *Anathema Maranatha*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. which is the dreadfulest curse in all the book of God, accursed till the Lord come.

3. It is the most secret stroke to themselves, that can be, and on this account so much the more desperate. Hence there is said to be poured out upon them the spirit of slumber; "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes." Montanus renders it, "The Lord hath mingled upon you the spirit of deep sleep." And thus it is an allusion to a soporiferous medicine, made up of opium and such-like stupefying ingredients, which casts a man into such a deep sleep, that do what you will to him, he feels, he knows it not. "Make their eyes heavy, and their ears dull; lest they should see, and hear, and be converted," Isa. vi. 9. Men are not sensible at all of this judgment; they do not in the least suspect it, and that is their misery. Though they are cursed trees, which shall never bring any fruit to perfection, yet many times they bear abundance of other fair and pleasant fruits to the eye, excellent gifts, and rare endowments: and these deceptive and undo

them; "We have prophesied in thy name." This makes the wound desperate, that there is no finding of it, no probe to search it.

4. It is a stroke that cuts off from the soul all the comforts and sweetness of religion. A man may pray, hear, and confer, but all those duties are dry stalks to him, which yield no meat, no solid substantial nutriment. Some common touches upon the affections he may sometimes find in duty; the melting voice or rhetoric of the preacher may perhaps strike his natural affections, as any other tragical story pathetically delivered may do; but as for any real communion with God in ordinances, any discoveries or views of the beauty of the Lord in them, that he cannot have, for these are the special effects and operations of the Spirit, and are always restrained. God has said to such, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with them"; and then what sweetness is there in ordinances? What is the word, separated from the Spirit, but a dead letter? It is the Spirit that quickens. The gospel works not like a natural cause upon those who hear it; if so, the effect would always follow, unless miraculously stopt and hindered; but it works like a moral instituted cause, whose efficacy and success depend upon the arbitrary concurrence of the Spirit with it. "The wind blows where it listeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit," "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Ordinances are as the pool of Bethesda, which had its healing virtue only when the angel moved the waters; but the Spirit never moves savingly upon the waters of ordinances, for the healing of the souls of these men, how many years soever they lie by them. Though others feel a divine power in them, yet they shall not. Here is the wo that lies upon them, God is departed from the means, and none can help them.

It is such a stroke upon the spirit of a man, as is a fearful sign of his eternal reprobation. It is true, we cannot positively say of a man in this life, that he is a reprobate, one that God will never show mercy to; but yet there are some probable marks of it upon some men, and they are awful wherever they appear. This is one of the saddest: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are

lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3. There cannot be a more dreadful character of a person marked out for wrath, than to continue unfruitful under the ordinances, as the rocks and miry places do under the natural influences of heaven. What blessed opportunities had Judas? He was under Christ's own ministry; he often heard the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; he was day and night in his company; and yet he was never the better; and why? Because he was "the son of perdition," that is unfruitful and consequently a man appointed to destruction and wrath.

It is such a stroke of God upon the souls of men, as immediately foreruns damnation. That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is "nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burnt." As some saints in this world have had a foretaste of heaven, which the scripture "calls the earnest of the Spirit;" so this is a precursor of hell, a sign of wrath at the door. We may say of it what is said of the pale horse in the Revelation, that hell follows it." "If a man abide not in me," says Christ, he is cast forth as a branch, and withered;" which is the very state of these barren, cursed souls. And what follows? "Men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Lo, this is the vengeance which the gospel executes upon this barren ground.

Reflections.—1. Blessed be God, who has made me feel the saving power of the gospel! O, let God be exalted for ever for this mercy, that how defective soever I am in common gifts, though I have a dull understanding, a frail memory, a stammering tongue, yet I have felt and do feel the power of the gospel upon my heart. I bless thee, my God, that although I labor under many spiritual infirmities, yet I am not sick of this incurable disease. I have given thee indeed just cause to inflict and execute this dreadful curse upon me, but thou hast not dealt with me after my deserts, but according to the riches of thy mercy. Some little fruit I bring forth, and this by virtue of my union with Jesus Christ. This has more in it as to my

comfort, than all the glittering gifts and splendid performances of the most glorious hypocrite can yield to him." "If I might have my choice," says one, "I would chuse and prefer the most despicable and sordid work of a rustic Christian before all the victories of Alexander and triumphs of Cæsar." "Blessed therefore be the Lord, who hath abounded unto me in all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

2. O then, let the formal professor say, how little cause have I to make my boast of ordinances, and glory in my external privileges, who never bear spiritual fruit under them ! If I well consider my condition, there is matter of trembling, and not of glorying, in these things. It may be while I have been glorying in them, the Lord has been secretly blasting my soul under them, and insensibly executing this horrible curse by them. Shall I boast with Capernaum that I am "lifted up to heaven," since I may with her, at last, be cast down to hell ? And if so, Lord, what a hell will my hell be ! It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for me. It drew tears from the eyes of Christ, when he was looking upon Jerusalem in the same state I fear that my own soul is in ; "He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes." So long have I been a hearer, a professor of the gospel, so many years have I enjoyed its ordinances ; but have they not been all dry and empty things to me ? Have not self-ends and worldly considerations lain at the bottom of my best duties ? Have not my discourses, in communion with the saints, been trade words, speaking what I have learnt but not felt ? Sad is my condition now, but it would be desperate and irrecoverable shouldst thou execute this curse upon me.

And what, says the less fruitful Christian, may I think of my condition ? Lord, I acknowledge that my unprofitableness has been shameful ; and this has made my condition doubtful. I have often trembled for fear, lest my root had been blasted by such a curse : but if so, whence is this trembling ? Whence these fears and sorrows about it ? Does such fruit grow in that soil which thou hast cursed ? I am told that on whom this judgment falls,

to them thou givest a heart that cannot repent. Lord, I bless thee for these evidences of freedom from the curse: for the fruits of fear, sorrow, and holy jealousy.

4. What a serious reflection should this occasion in every dispenser of the gospel! How should he say when he goes to preach the gospel—I am going to preach that word which is to be a savor of life or death unto these souls. Upon how many of my poor hearers may the curse of perpetual barrenness be executed this day! O how should such a thought melt his heart into compassion over them, and make him beg hard, and plead earnestly with God for a better issue of the gospel than this upon them.

CHAPTER VII.

On the plowing of Corn Land.

Observation.—It requires not only strength, but much skill and judgment, to manage and guide the plow. The Hebrew word which we translate to plow, signifies to be intent, as an artificer is when about some curious piece of work. The plow must neither go too shallow nor too deep in the earth; it must not indent the ground, by making crooked furrows. Hence that expression in Luke ix. 62; “He that puts his hand to the plow, and looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven;” the meaning is, that as he who plows must have his eyes always forward, to guide and direct his hand in casting the furrows straight and even; so he who heartily resolves for heaven must addict himself wholly and intently to the business of religion, and not have his mind entangled with the things of the world, which he has left behind him. It appears then that the right management of the plow requires as much skill as strength.

Application.—This observation in nature serves excellently to shadow forth this proposition in divinity, that the work of the Spirit in convincing and humbling the heart of a sinner, is a work wherein much of the wisdom, as

well as power, of God is discovered. The work of repentance, and saving contrition, is set forth in scripture by this metaphor of plowing, Jer. iv. 3; Hos. x. 12. "Plow up your fallow ground;" that is, be convinced, humbled, and broken-hearted for sin. And the resemblance betwixt both these works appears in the following particulars—

1. It is a hard and difficult work to plow; it is also a very hard thing to convince and humble the heart of a secure and proud sinner. What Luther says of a dejected soul, that "it is as easy to raise the dead, as to comfort such a one," the same I may say of the secure confident sinner; it is as easy to rend the rocks, as to work saving contrition upon such a heart. All the melting language and earnest entreaties of the gospel, cannot urge such a heart to shed a tear. Therefore it is called a heart of stone, a rock. Yet when the Lord comes in the power of his Spirit, these rocks do rend and yield to the power of the word.

2. The plow pierces deep into the bosom of the earth, makes, as it were, a deep gash or wound in the heart of it. So does the Spirit upon the hearts of sinners; he pierces their very souls by conviction. It comes upon the conscience with such piercing power, and sends the sword of conviction so deep into their souls, that there is no stanching the blood, no healing this wound, till Christ himself come, and undertake the cure. This barbed arrow cannot be pulled out of their hearts by any, but the hand that shot it in. Discourse with such a man about his troubles, and he will tell you, that all the sorrows he ever had in this world, loss of estate, health, children, or whatever else, are but nothing to this; this swallows up all other troubles. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of his water-spouts, when the waves and billows of God go over the soul." Spiritual sorrows are deep waters, in which the stoutest and most magnanimous soul would sink, did not Jesus Christ, by a secret and supporting hand, hold it up and preserve it.

3. The plow turns up and discovers such things as lay hid before in the bosom of the earth, and were covered under a fair green surface from the eyes of men. Thus when the Lord plows up the heart of a sinner by convic-

tion, then the secrets of his heart are made manifest; the most secret and shameful sins will then come out; for "the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and secret intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12. It makes the fire burn inwardly, so that the soul has no rest till confession give a vent to trouble. Fain would the sinner conceal and hide his shame, but the word follows him through all his sinful shifts, and brings him at last to be his own accuser, witness, and judge.

4. The work of the plow is but a preparative work in order to fruit. Should the husbandman plow his ground ever so often, yet if the seed be not cast in and quickened, in vain is the harvest expected. Thus conviction also is but preparative to a farther work upon the soul of a sinner. If it goes no farther, it proves but an abortive or untimely birth. Many have gone thus far, and there they have stopped. They have been like a field plowed, but not sowed, which is a matter of trembling consideration; for hereby their sin is greatly aggravated, and their eternal misery so much the more increased. O with what horror will a poor lost creature reflect in hell—How near was I once, under such a sermon, to conversion! My sins were set in order before me; my conscience terrified me with the guilt of them. Many purposes and resolves I made then to turn to God, which had they been perfected by answerable execution, I had never come to this place of torment; but there I stopped, and that was my eternal undoing.

5. It is best plowing when the earth is prepared and mollified by showers of rain; then the work goes on sweetly and easily, and never does the heart so kindly melt, as when the gospel-clouds dissolve, and the free grace and love of Jesus Christ comes sweetly showering down upon it; then it relents and mourns ingenuously, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done," Ezek. xvi. 63. So it was with that poor penitent, Luke vii. 38, When the Lord Jesus had discovered to

her the superabounding riches of his grace in the pardon of her manifold abominations, her heart melted within her; she washed the feet of Christ with tears. And indeed, there is as much difference betwixt the tears which are forced by the terrors of the law, and those which are extracted by the grace of the gospel, as there is betwixt those of a condemned malefactor who weeps to consider the misery he is under, and those of a pardoned malefactor who receives his pardon at the foot of the ladder, and is melted by the mercy and clemency of his gracious prince towards him.

6. The plow kills those rank weeds which grow in the field, turns them up by the roots, buries and rots them. So does saving conviction kill sin at the root, makes the soul sick of it, begets indignation in the heart against it.

7. That field is not well plowed, where the plow jumps and skips over the ground; it must run up the whole field alike; and that heart is not savingly convicted, where any lust is spared and left untouched. Saving conviction extends itself to all sins; not only to sin in general, with this cold confession, "I am a sinner," but to the particulars of sin, yea, to the particular circumstances and aggravations of time, place, manner, occasions; to the sin of nature, as well as practice. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity," Psal. li. 5. There must be no hiding of any sin. The sparing of one sin, is a sure argument that thou art not truly humbled for any sin. So far is the convinced soul from a studious concealment of a beloved sin, that it weeps over that more than over any other actual sin.

8. New ground is much more easily plowed, than that which by long lying out of tillage is more fastened together by deep-rooted thorns and brambles, which render it difficult to the plowman. This old ground is like an old sinner, who has been long time hardening under the means of grace. O the difficulty of convincing such a person! Sin has got such root in his heart, he is so habituated to the reproofs and calls of the word, that few such are wrought upon. How many young persons are called to one obdurate, inveterate sinner! I do not say but God may call home such a soul at the eleventh hour, but

I may say of these, compared with others, "One man among a thousand have I found."

Reflections.—1. O grace, says the true convert, for ever to be admired, that God should send forth his word and Spirit to plow up my hard and stony heart, yea, mine, when he has left so many of more tender, ingenuous, sweet, and melting tempers without any culture or means of grace ! O blessed gospel, heart-dissolving voice ! I have felt thine efficacy, I have experienced thy divine and irresistible power. Thou art indeed sharper than any two-edged sword, and woundest to the heart ; but thy wounds are the wounds of a friend. All the wounds thou hast made in my soul, were so many doors opened to let in Christ ; all the blows thou gavest my conscience, were but to beat off my soul from sin, which I embraced, and had retained to my everlasting ruin, hadst thou not separated them and me. O wise and merciful Physician ! Thou didst indeed bind me with cords of conviction and sorrow, but it was only to cut out that stone in my heart, which had killed me if it had continued there. O how did I struggle and oppose thee, as if thou hadst come with the sword of an enemy, rather than the probe of a skilful and tender-hearted physician ! Blessed be the day wherein my sin was discovered and embittered ! O happy sorrows, which prepared for such matchless joys ! O blessed hand, which turned my salt waters into pleasant wine ! After many pangs and sorrows of soul, thou didst, at length, bring forth deliverance and peace.

2. But O, let the stubborn sinner say, what a rock of adamant is this heart of mine, that never yet was wounded, and savinely pierced for sin by the terrors of the law, or melting voice of the gospel ! Long have I sat under the word, but when did I feel a relenting pang ? O my soul ! my stupified soul, thou hast got an antidote against repentance, but hast thou any against hell ? Thou canst keep out the sense of sin now, but art thou able to keep out the terrors of the Lord hereafter ? If thou couldst turn a deaf ear to the sentence of Christ in the day of judgment, as easily as thou dost to the entreaties of Christ in the day of grace, it were somewhat ; but surely there is no defence against that. Ah fool that I am, to quench

these convictions, unless I knew how to quench those flames they warn me of!

3. And may not I, says another, challenge the first place among all the mourners in the world, who have lost all those convictions which at several times came upon me under the word? I have been often awakened by it, and filled with terrors and tremblings under it; but those troubles have soon worn off again; and my heart, like water removed from the fire returned to its native coldness. Lord, what a dismal case am I in! Many convictions have I stifled, which, it may be, shall never more be revived, until thou revive them against me in judgment. My troubles have wrought no deliverance, neither have my lusts fallen before them. My conscience, indeed, hath been sometimes sick with sin, but then, with the dog, have I turned again to my vomit; and now I fear I am given over to a heart that cannot repent. O that these pangs could be quickened again! but, alas, they are ceased! I am like a prisoner escaped, and again retaken, whom the goaler loads with double irons. Surely, O my soul, if thy spiritual troubles return not again, they are but gone back to bring eternal troubles. It is with thee, O my soul, as with a man whose bones have been broken, and not well set; who must, how terrible soever it appear to him, endure the pain of breaking and setting them again, if ever he be made a sound man. O that I might rather chuse to be the object of thy wounding mercy, than of thy sparing cruelty! If thou plow not up my heart again by compunction, I know it must be rent in pieces at last by desperation.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Seed Corn.

Observation.—HUSBANDMEN are very careful and curious about their seed-corn, that it may not only be clean and pure, but the best and most excellent of its kind; “He casteth in the principal wheat.”

Application.—The choice and principal seed corn, with which the fields are sowed, after they are prepared for it, admirably shadows forth those excellent principles of grace which are infused into the regenerate soul. Their agreement is obvious in the ten following particulars ; and their excellency above other principles in seven more.

1. The earth at first brought forth corn and every seed yielding fruit naturally, without human industry ; but since the curse came upon it, it must be plowed and sowed, or no fruit can be expected. So man, at first, had all the principles of holiness in his nature, but now they must be infused by regeneration, or else his nature is as void of holiness as the barren and untill'd desert is of corn.

2. The earlier the seed is sown, the better it is rooted, and more able to endure the asperities of the winter ; so when grace is early infused, when nature is sanctified in the bud, grace is thereby exceedingly advantaged. It was Timothy's singular advantage, that he knew the scriptures from a child.

3. Frost and snows conduce very much to the well-rooting of the seed. So do those sanctified afflictions, which the people of God usually meet with after their calling, and often in their very seed time. "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction," 1 Thes. 1, 6. But if they have fair weather then, they will meet with weather hard enough afterwards. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions," Heb. x, 32.

4. When the seed is cast into the earth, it must be covered up by the harrow, the use whereof in husbandry is to open and let in the corn into the bosom of the earth, and there cover it up for its security from birds that would devour it. Thus does the most wise God provide for the security of that grace which he at first disseminates in the hearts of his people. He is the finisher as well as the author of their grace. The care of God over the graces of his people, is like the covering of the seed for security.

5. Seed-corn is in its own nature of much more value and worth than other corn; the husbandman casts in the principal wheat. So is the seed of grace sown in the renewed soul; for it is called "the seed of God," 1 John iii. 9; "the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. Grace is far beyond all the glory of this world; it is more precious than gold. "The price of it is above rubies, and all that thou canst desire is not to be compared with it," Prov. iii. 15.

6. There is a great deal of spirit and vigor in a little seed; though it be small in bulk, yet it is great in virtue and efficacy. Gracious habits are also vigorous and efficacious things. Such is their efficacy that they overcome the world; "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." They totally alter and change the person in whom they are. "He that persecuted us in time past, now preacheth the faith which he once destroyed." They enable the soul to do and suffer great things for God.

7. The stalk and ear are virtually in a small grain of corn. So are all the fruits of obedience which believers afterwards bring forth to God, virtually contained in these seeds of grace. It is strange to consider, that from a mustard-seed, which, as Christ says, is the least of all seeds, should grow such great branches that the birds of the air may build their nests in them. Surely, the heroic acts and achievements of the most renowned believers sprang from small beginnings at first, to eminency and glory.

8. The fruitfulness of the seed depends upon the sun and rain. And the principles of grace in us have as necessary a dependence upon the assisting and exciting grace of God. For though it be true, that they are immortal seed, yet that is not so much from their own strength as from the promises made to them, and that constant influx from above, by which they are revived and preserved from time to time.

9. The seed is more fruitful in some soils than in others, prospers much better, and comes sooner to maturity. So do graces thrive better and grow faster in some persons than in others. "Your faith groweth ex-

ceedingly," 2 Thes. i. 3; "whilst the things that are in others are ready to die," Rev. iii. 2. Though no man's heart be naturally a kind soil to grace, yet doubtless grace is more advantaged in some dispositions than in others.

10. And, lastly, their agreement, as seed, appears in this, the seed-corn is scattered into all parts of the field, as proportionally and equally as may be. So is grace diffused into all the faculties: the judgment, will, and the affections, are all sown with these new principles, "The God of peace sanctify you wholly."

And thus you see why principles of grace are called seed. Now, in the next place, to show you the excellency of these holy principles with which sanctified souls are embellished and adorned, and to convince you that true grace excels all other principles by which other persons are actuated, even as the wheat doth the chaff, I shall here institute a comparison betwixt grace and the most splendid gifts in the world; and its transcendent excellency above them all, will evidently appear in the seven following particulars—

1. The most excellent common gifts come out of the common treasury of God's bounty, and that in a natural way. They are but the improvement of a man's natural abilities, or, as one calls them, the sparks of nature blown up by the wind of a more benign and liberal education; but principles of grace are of a divine and heavenly origin, not induced or raised from nature, but supernaturally infused by the Spirit from on high. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." When a soul is sanctified by them, "he partakes of the divine nature;" "is born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God," In this respect they differ from gifts, as the manna which was rained down from heaven differed from common bread, which the earth produces in a natural way.

2. The best natural gifts afford not that sweetness and solid comfort to the soul that grace does. A man may have an understanding full of light, and a heart void of comfort at the same time; but grace is a fountain of pure living streams of peace and comfort. "Believing,

we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ;" " Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." All true pleasures and delights are seminally in grace. They are sown in those divine and heavenly graces, which are glory in the bud.

3. Gifts adorn the person, but do not secure the soul from wrath. A man may be admired for them among men, and rejected eternally by God. Who can considerately read the sixth chapter of the Hebrews, and not tremble to think in what a forlorn case a soul may be, though set off and accomplished with the rarest endowments of this kind ! We read, that many shall say to Christ in " that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils ?" and yet themselves at last cast out as a prey to devils. How divinely and rhetorically did Balaam speak and prophecy ! What rare and excellent parts had the Scribes and Pharisees, who upon that account, are styled " the princes of the world." What profound and excellent parts had the heathen sages and philosophers ! These things are so far from securing the soul from the wrath to come, that they often expose it unto wrath, and are as oil to increase the eternal burnings. But now gracious principles are " the things that accompany salvation." Glory is by promise assured and made over to him that possesses them. There is but a little point of time betwixt him and the glorified spirits above. And how inconsiderable a matter is a little time, which is contracting every hour. Hence the scripture speaks of believers as already saved ; " We are saved by hope ;" " We are made to sit in heavenly places."

4. Gifts may ruin the person that possesses them ; it may be better, in respect of a man's own condition, that he had never had them. " Knowledge," says the apostle, " puffeth up." The saint's knowledge is better than the scholar's ; for he has his own heart, instead of a commentary, to help him. Aristotle said, that a little knowledge about heavenly things, though conjectural, is better than much of earthly things, though certain. It does not puff up the heart, but always humbles it.

5. Gifts may be given to a man for the sake of others,

and not out of love to himself. God indeed makes use of them to do his children good ; the church is benefitted by them ; though their possessors are but like cooks ; they prepare excellent dishes, on which the saints feed and are nourished, though they themselves may taste them not. They are ministering, but not sanctifying gifts, proceeding not from the good-will of God to him who has them, but to those he benefits by them. And O what a sad consideration will this one day be to think, I helped such a soul to heaven, while I myself must lodge in hell !

6. Sin may dwell with the most excellent natural gifts under the same roof, I mean, in the same heart. A man may have the tongue of an angel, and the heart of a devil. "The wisdom of the philosophers," says Lactantius, "does not root out, but hide their vices." The learned Pharisees were but painted sepulchres. Gifts are but as a fair glove drawn over a foul hand. But grace is incompatible with sin in dominion ; it purifies the heart, cleanses the conscience, crucifies the affections and lusts of the flesh ; is not content with the concealment, but with the ruin, of corruptions.

7. And, lastly, gifts must leave us at last. "Whether there be knowledge that shall cease." "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness of it as the flower of the grass ; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever." Many times they leave a man before death ; one blow may make a wise man a fool : but they all certainly leave us at death. Then all natural excellency departs. Death strips the soul of all its splendid ornaments ; then the rhetorical tongue is struck dumb, the active wit and curious fancy shall entertain our ears with no more pleasant discourses. But grace ascends with the soul into eternity, and there receives its perfection and accomplishment. Gifts take their leave of the soul as Orpah did of Naomi ; but grace says as Ruth said, "Where thou goest I will go, and, where thou lodgest I will lodge ; and nothing shall separate thee and me." Now put all this together, and then judge whether the apostle spoke hyperboles, when he said, "Covet ear-

nestly the best gifts ; and yet I show unto you a more excellent way."

Reflections.—The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, may the gracious soul say. How defective soever I am in gifts, yet blessed be the Lord who has sown the true seeds of grace in my heart. What though I am not famed and honored among men ? Let it suffice me that I am precious in the eyes of the Lord. Though he has not abounded to me in the gifts of nature, " yet blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who hath abounded to me in all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Is not a true jewel, though spurned in the dirt, more precious than a false one, though set in gold ? Why art thou troubled, O my soul, for the want of those things which reprobates may have ? why art thou not rather admiring and blessing God for those things which none but the favorites of heaven can have ? Is not an ounce of pure gold more valuable than many pounds of gilded brass ? What, though the dews of Helicon descend not upon my head, if ~~in~~ the meantime the sweet influences of Sion fall upon my heart ? O my God, how much soever others are elated by the light of their knowledge, I have cause to adore thee for the heavenly fire with which thou hast warmed my affections.

Pause awhile, my soul, upon this point, may another say. With what seed is my heart sown, and of what kind are those things wherein I excel others ? Are they indeed special seeds of grace, or common gifts and natural excellencies ? If the latter, little cause have I to pride myself in them, were they ten thousand times more than they are. If these things be indeed the things that accompany salvation, the seed of God, the true and real work of grace, then, How comes it to pass, that I never found any pains of labor necessary for the production of them ? I have indeed often felt an aching head, whilst I have read and studied to increase my knowledge : but when did I feel an aching heart for sin ? O I begin to suspect that it is not right. Yea, and my suspicion increases while I consider that grace is of an humbling na-

ture. Lord, how have I been elated by my gifts, and valued myself above what was meet! Say, O my conscience, have I not delighted more in the praise of men than in the approbation of God? O how many evidences dost thou produce against me! Indeed these are sad symptoms that I have showed thee, but there is yet another, which renders thy case more suspicious yet, yea, that which thou canst make no rational defence against, even the inefficiency of all thy gifts and knowledge to mortify any one of all thy lusts. It is beyond all dispute, that gifts may, but grace cannot exist without mortification of sin. Now what lust has fallen before these excellent parts of mine? Does not pride, passion, covetousness, and indeed the whole body of sin, live and thrive in me as much as ever? Lord, I yield the cause; I can defend it no longer against my conscience, which casts and condemns me. O show me a more excellent way. O that I had the sincerity of the poorest saint, though I should lose the applause of all my talents! with these I ~~hope~~ I may go to hell, but without some better thing there is no hope of heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

On Springing-Weather after Seed-Time.

Observation.—THE earth, after it is plowed and sowed, must be watered and warmed with the dews and influences of heaven, or no fruit can be expected. If God do not open to you his good treasure, the heavens, to give rain unto the land in its season, and bless all the work of your hands, the earth cannot yield her increase. The order and independence of natural causes in the production of fruit, is excellently described in Hos. i. 21; “I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and wine, and oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.” Jezreel must have corn, and wine, and oil, or they cannot live; they cannot have it unless the earth bring it forth; the earth cannot bring it forth

without the heavens ; the heavens cannot yield a drop unless God hear them, that is, unlock and open them. Nature, and natural causes, are nothing else but the order in which God works. This some heathens, by the light of nature, acknowledged, and therefore when they went to plow in the morning, they laid one hand upon the plow, to show their own part to be labor, and held up the other hand to Ceres, the goddess of corn, to show that their expectation of plenty was from their supposed deity. I fear many Christians lay both hands to the plow, and seldom lift up heart or hand to God.

Application.—It is as impossible, in an ordinary way, for souls to be made fruitful in grace and holiness, without the dews and influences of ordinances and the blessing of God upon them, as for the earth to yield her fruit without the natural influences of heaven ; for what dews, showers, and clear shinings after rain, are to the fields, that the word and ordinances of God are to the souls of men. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass,” Deut. xxxii. 2. “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud ; so shall my word be that goeth forth of my mouth,” Isa. lv. 10. And as the doctrine of the gospel is rain, so gospel-ministers are the clouds in which those heavenly vapors are bound up ? the resemblance lies in the following particulars—

1. The rain comes from heaven. The doctrines of the gospel are also of heavenly extraction and descent ; they are heavenly truths which are brought to you in earthen vessels ; things that were hid in God, and come from his bosom. You are not to look upon the truths which ministers deliver, as the mere effects and fruits of their inventions and parts ; they are but the conduits through which these celestial waters are conveyed to you. It is all heavenly ; the ministers are from heaven, their doctrine from heaven, the efficacy and success of it from heaven.

2. The rain falls by divine direction and appointment : “He causes it to rain upon one city, and not upon another,” Amos iv. 7. You will often see a cloud dissolve

and spread itself upon one place, when there is not a drop within a few miles of it. Thus is the gospel sent to shed its rich influences upon one place, and not upon another; it pours down showers of blessings upon one town or parish, whilst others are dry like the ground which lay near to Gideon's wet fleece. "To you is the word of this salvation *sent*;" it comes not by chance, but by commission and appointment, and it is sent to you by special direction.

3. There is a great deal of difference in the showers of rain that fall upon the earth. Sometimes you have a hasty shower, which deluges the roads and streets, but it is gone presently; the earth has but little benefit by it; and sometimes you have a sweet, gentle, soaking rain, that refreshes the earth abundantly. This is called "the small rain," and the former "the great rain of his strength," Job xxxvii. 6. So it is in these spiritual showers. The effects of some sermons are very transient; they touch the heart a little for the present, by way of conviction or comfort, but the feeling they produce fleets away immediately. At other times the gospel, like a settled moderate rain, goes to the root, to the very heart. The influences of it are sometimes abiding, and remain much longer in the heart, than the rain does in the earth. There are effects left in the heart, by some sermons and duties, that will never go out of it. "I will never forget thy precepts," said David, "for by them thou hast quickened me."

4. The rain is most beneficial to the earth, when there comes warm sunshine with it or after it. This the scripture calls "a clear shining after rain." So it is with gospel showers, when the Sun of righteousness shines on the soul under the word, darting down the beams of grace and love. O how comfortable is this! and how effectual to melt the heart! And as the warm rain is most refreshing, so when the word comes warmly, from the melting affections of the preacher, who imparts not only the gospel, but his own soul with it, it does abundantly more good than that which drops coldly from the lips of the unaffected speaker.

5. Showers of rain exceedingly refresh the earth, as a man is refreshed by a draught of water, when his spirits are spent. O how welcome is a shower to the thirsty,

ground! Hence the little hills are said to rejoice on every side, yea, to shout for joy and sing when a shower comes; Psal. lxv. 12. But never were showers of rain so sweetly refreshing to the thirsty earth, as gospel-showers are to gracious souls; they comfort their very hearts. What joy was there in Samaria, when the gospel came to that place? Acts viii. 8. It revives the soul, it is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and a very jubilee in the heart.

6. Rain is necessary at seed-time, to make ready the earth to receive the seed. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it; thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof," Psal. lxv. 9. And this the scripture calls the former rain. And as this is necessary about seed-time, so the latter rain is as needful about earing-time, to disclose the ear and to bring it to perfection. Both these are great blessings to the earth, and conduce to a plentiful harvest. "Be glad then ye children of Sion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former and the latter rain, in the first month, and the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil." Joel ii. 23. Thus the gospel has a double use and benefit also. It is necessary as the former rain at seed-time, it causes the first spring of grace in the heart. So also it has the use of the latter rain to ripen those precious fruits of the Spirit in the souls of believers.

7. After a great fall of rain, there usually comes a drought. And truly when a people are glutted with a fulness of gospel-mercies, it is usual with God to shut up and restrain the gospel clouds, that, for a time, at least, there be no dews upon them, and thereby teach them to prize their despised, because common, mercies, at an higher rate. For mercies are most prized when most wanted. "In those days the word of the Lord was precious; there was no open vision." 1 Sam. iii. 1. It is with spiritual as

with temporal food, slighted when plenteous; but if a famine once come, then every bit of bread is precious. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her misery, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, Lam. i. 7. It is both a sinful and dangerous thing to trifle with gospel-mercies, and despise the ministers of the gospel. The time may come when we may be glad of the plainest sermon from the mouth of the meanest ambassador of Christ.

8. The prayers of saints are the keys that open and shut the natural clouds, and cause them either to give out or withhold their influences. "Elias was a man subject to like passions, as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit," Jam. v. 17. God has subjected the works of his hands to the prayers of his saints; Isa. xlvi. 11.

Prayer is also the golden key which opens the mystical gospel-clouds, and dissolves them into sweet gracious showers. God will have the whole work of the ministry carried on by the prayers of his people. They may tell their people, as a great general once told his soldiers—that he flew on their wings. "Pray for me," says the great apostle, "that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mysteries of the gospel." Yea, by the saints' prayers it is, that ministers obtain the success and fruits of their labors. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." And thus you have the metaphor opened. O that these truths may come down in sweet showers upon the hearts both of ministers and people in the following reflections!

Reflections.—Am I then as a cloud? the gospel minister may say. And is my doctrine as rain to water the Lord's inheritance? And yet do I think it much to be tossed up and down by the furious winds and storms of persecution? Do not I see the clouds above me in continual motion and agitation? And shall I dream of a fixed set-

ted state? No; he that will not let men alone to be quiet in their lusts, must expect but little quiet from men in this life. But it is enough, Lord, that a rest remaineth for thy servant. Let me be so wise as to secure a rest to come, and not so vain as to expect a rest on earth.

And O that I may study those instructive clouds, from which God pours down refreshing showers to quench and satisfy the thirsty earth! In this may I resemble them, and come amongst the people of the Lord, "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." O let not those thirsty souls that wait for me as for the rain, "return like the the troops of Tema, ashamed, with their heads covered!" Job vi. 19. O that my lips may refresh many!

Lift up thine eyes to the clouds, and behold, to how great an height the sun has mounted them; by reason of their sublimity it is that they are called the clouds of heaven. Lord, let me be a cloud of heaven too. Let my heart and conversation be both there. Heavenly truths are the subjects of my daily study; and shall earthly things be the objects of my daily delights and loves? God forbid that ever my earthly conversation should contradict and shame my heavenly calling and profession. Shine forth thou glorious Sun of righteousness, and my heart shall quickly be attracted and mounted above these visible clouds, yea, and above the visible heavens.

1. Is the gospel rain? the private Christian may say. And are its ministers clouds? Wo is me then, that my habitation is upon the mountains of Gilboa, where there are no dews! Ah sad lot, that I should be like Gideon's dry fleece, whilst the ground round about me is wet with the dew of heaven! O thou that commandest the clouds above, and openest the windows of heaven, remember and refresh this parched wilderness, wherein I live, with showers of grace, that we may not be as the heath in the desert, which seeth not when good cometh, nor inhabit the parched places of the wilderness.

And when O Lord, thou dost cause the heavens above me to be black with clouds, and daily sendest down showers of gospel-blessings, O that I may be as the

parched earth under them—not for barrenness, but for thirstiness ! Let me say, “ My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.” Does the earth so greedily drink the showers, and open as many mouths as there are clefts in it, to receive what the clouds dispense ? And shall these precious soul-enriching showers fleet away unprofitably from me ? If so, then what an account have I to make for all those gospel-blessings that I have enjoyed ; for all those gospel-dews and showers where-with I have been watered ! Should I be found fruitless at last, it will fare better with the barren and uncultivated wilderness than with me ; more tolerable for Indians and barbarians that never heard the gospel, than for me who have been so assiduously and plentifully watered by it.

CHAPTER X.

On a Dearth through want of Rain.

Observation.—It is deservedly accounted a sad judgment, when God shuts up the heavens over our heads, and makes the earth as brass under our feet. Then the husbandmen are called to mourning ; all the fields languish, and the cattle pine with thirst. Such a sad state the prophet describes. “ The nobles have sent their little ones to the waters ; they came to the pits and found no water ; they returned with their vessels empty ; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads, because the ground is chapt ; for there was no rain in the earth ; the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads ; yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass ; and the wild asses did stand in the high places ; they snuffed up the wind like dragons ; their eyes failed because there was no grass,” Jer. xiv. 3. And that which makes the want of rain so terrible a judgment, is the famine of bread, which necessarily follows these extraordinary droughts,

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and is one of the sorest temporal judgments which God inflicts upon the world.

Application.—And they truly have as much cause to weep and tremble, over whose souls God shuts up the spiritual clouds of the gospel, and thereby sends a spiritual famine upon their souls. Such a judgment the Lord threatens in Amos viii. 11. “Behold the day is come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.” Parallel to which is that text in Isa. v. 6. “I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain not upon it.” And we find both in human and sacred histories, that when God has shut up the spiritual clouds, removing or silencing his ministers, Christians have ever been deeply affected with it, and reckoned it a most tremendous judgment. Thus the Christians of Antioch, when Chrysostom their minister was banished, judged it better to lose the sun out of the firmament, than lose their minister. And when Nazianzen was taking his leave of Constantinople, as he was preaching his farewell sermon, the people were exceedingly affected with his loss; and among the rest, an old man in the congregation fell into a bitter paroxysm of grief, and cried out, “Go, father, if you must; and take away the whole Trinity with you;” meaning, that God would not stay when he was gone. How did the Christians of Antioch also weep and lament, when Paul was taking his farewell of them? He had been a cloud of blessings to that place; but now they must expect no more showers from him. When the ark of God, which was the symbol of the divine presence among the Jews, was taken, “all the city cried out.” The loss of a gospel-ministry is an inestimable loss, not to be repaired but by its own return, or by heaven! In the times of popish persecution, when godly ministers were haled away from their flocks to martyrdom, the poor Christians would meet them in their way to prison or the stake, with their little ones in their arms, and throwing themselves at their feet, would thus bespeak them: “What shall be our estate, now

you are gone to martyrdom? Who shall instruct these poor babes? Who shall ease our afflicted consciences? Who shall lead us in the way of life?" And to let you see there is sufficient ground for this sorrow, when God restrains the influences of the gospel, solemnly consider that it is a dreadful token of God's great anger against a people to remove the gospel from them. The anger of God was fearfully incensed against the church of Ephesus, when he did but threaten to come against her, and remove the candlestick out of its place, Rev. ii. 5. It is a stroke at the soul, a blow at the root; usually the last, and therefore the worst of judgments.—Consider also the deplorable state in which all unregenerate souls are left, after the gospel is removed from them. What will become of these? By whom shall they be gathered? It made the bowels of Christ yearn within him, when he looked upon the scattered multitude that had no shepherd, Matth. ix. 36.—The judgment will appear very heavy, if you consider the loss which God's own people sustain by the removal of the gospel; for therein they lose their chief glory. The principal thing in which the peculiar glory of Israel consisted was this, that "unto them were committed the oracles of God." On this account it was called the glorious land; Dan. xi. 16. This made them greater than all the nations round about them; Deut. iv. 7, 8. By losing the ordinances they lose their comforts, and soul-refreshments; they lose their defence and safety; they lose their spiritual food and soul-subsistence. In a word, a spiritual famine necessarily follows, a famine the most terrible of all famines. Now to shew you the analogy between this and a temporal famine, that therein you may see what cause you have to be deeply affected with it, consider these five particulars—

1. A famine is caused by the failing of bread, or that which is in the stead and has the use of bread. Dainties and superfluous rarities may fail, and yet men may subsist comfortably. As long as people have bread and water, they will not famish; but once take away bread, and the spirit of man fails. On this account bread is called a staff, because what a staff is to an aged and

feeble man, that bread is to the faint and feeble frame. And what bread is to the natural spirits, that, and more than that, the word is to gracious spirits. "I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food," Job xxiii. 12. If once God break this staff, the inner-man, that hidden man of the heart, will quickly begin to fail and falter.

2. It is not every degree of scarcity of bread that presently makes a famine, but a general failing of it; when no bread is to be had, or that which is to be had, yields no nutriment. And so it is in a spiritual famine, which is occasioned, either by God's removing all the ordinances, or else, though there be preaching, prayer, and other ordinances left, yet the presence of God is not with them.

3. In a famine, mean and coarse things become sweet and pleasant. Famine raises the price and value of them. That which before you would have thrown to your dogs, now goes down pleasantly with yourselves. "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." It is storied of Artaxerxes Memnon, that when he was flying before his enemies, he fed hungrily upon barley-bread, and said, "O what pleasure have I hitherto been ignorant of!" When great Darius drank the water, that had been defiled with dead carcases, which had been slain in battle, he professed to have never drunk more pleasant drink. Just so does the famine of the word raise the price and estimation of vulgar and despised truths. O what would we then give for one of those sermons, one of those sabbaths, we formerly enjoyed! "In those days the word of the Lord is precious." When God calls to the enemy to take away and remove his contemned but precious dainties from his children, they will then learn to prize their spiritual food at a higher rate.

4. In time of famine some persons suffer more than others. The dearth falls heaviest on the poor; as long as any thing is to be had for money, the rich will have it. So it falls out in a spiritual famine. Although the most experienced and best furnished Christians will have enough to do to live in the absence of ordinances, yet they are likely to subsist much better than weak, ignorant, and inexperienced ones. Some Christians have husbanded

their time well, and, like Joseph in the seven years' plenty, laid up for a scarcity. The word of God dwells richly in them. Some there are, who are strong, and the word of God remaineth in them; of whom it may be said, as Jerome said of Nepotianus, that by long and assiduous meditation on the scriptures, he had made his breast the very library of Christ. But others are babes in Christ; and though God will preserve that good work which he has begun in them, yet these poor babes will soonest feel, and be most concerned in, the loss of their spiritual father.

5. In time of famine, there are pitiful cries and heart-breaking complaints, wherever you go. O the many pale faces you then see, and the sad language that rings in your ears in every place! One cries, "Bread, bread;" another faints and falls down at your door. "All her people sigh." Yea, the poor little ones cry to their mothers, "Where is the corn and wine?" and then pour out their souls into their mothers' bosom. Just so it is in a famine of the word. Christians every where sigh and cry, "O where are our godly ministers? our sabbaths, sermons, sacraments? My fathers! my fathers! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! How beautiful were your feet upon the mountains!" And then they weep, like the people at Paul's departure, to think they shall see their faces no more.

Reflections.—Is the famine of the word such a fearful judgment? asks the ungrateful sinner. Then, Lord, pardon my unthankfulness for the plentiful and long-continued enjoyment of such a precious and invaluable mercy. How lightly have I esteemed the great things of the gospel! O that with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, I might bless the Lord that ever I was brought forth in an age of so much light, in a valley of visions, in a land flowing with gospel-mercies! "Hath not God made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth? and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation?" Acts xvii. 26. Many of these great and populous nations are involved in gross darkness. Now that of all the several ages of the world and places in it, God should choose the best place for me and bring me forth in it, in such a happy period of time,

as can hardly be paralleled in history for the abundance of gospel-mercies that this age and nation has enjoyed ; that my mother did not bring me forth in the deserts of Arabia, or wastes of America, but in England, where God hath made the sun of the gospel to stand still, as the natural sun once did over Gibeon ; and that such a mercy should no more affect my soul—let shame cover my face for this, and trembling seize my heart !

Is the gospel indeed departed ? its sweet influences restrained ? and a famine, worse than that of bread, come upon us ? “ Alas for the day ! ” says the deprived Christian ; “ for it is a great day, so that none is like it ; it is even the day of Jacob’s trouble ! ” Wo is me, that ever I should survive the gospel, and the precious mercies of it ! What horrid sins have been harbored amongst us, for which the Lord contends by such an unparalleled judgment ? Lord, let me justify thee, even in this severe dispensation. The provocations of thy sons and of thy daughters have been very great, and none greater than mine. May we not this day read our sin in our punishment ? O what curious and itching ears had thy people in the days of plenty ! Manner, tones, and gestures, were more regarded than the excellent treasures of divine truths. Ah, my soul, I remember my faults this day. Little did I then consider, that sermons work not upon hearts, as they are thus elegant, thus admirable, but as they are instruments in the hand of God appointed to such an end ; even as Austin said of the conduits of water, “ Though one be in the shape of an angel, another of a beast, yet the water refreshes as it is water, and not as it comes from such a conduit.” By this also, O Lord, thou rebukest the supineness and formality of thy people. How drowsy, dull, and careless have they been under the most excellent and quickening means ! Few more than I. Alas ! I have often presented my body before the Lord in ordinances, but my soul hath been wandering abroad. I should have come from under every sermon, as a sheet comes from the press, with all the stamps and lively impressions of the truths I have heard upon my heart ; but, alas ! if it had been demanded of me, as once it was of Aristotle, after a long and curious oration, how he liked

it; I might have answered, as he did, "Truly I did not hear it, for I was all the while minding another matter." Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all that is come upon us.

I am new, says the silent minister, as a spring shut up, that can yield no refreshment to thirsty souls, ready to perish. Thou hast said to me as once thou saidst to Ezekiel, "Son of man, behold, I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb." This is a very heavy judgment; but thou must be justified and cleared in it. Although men may not, yet God, if he please, may put a lighted candle under a bushel. And herein I must acknowledge thy righteousness. Many times have I been sinfully silent, when both thy glory and the interest of souls engaged me to speak. Most justly therefore hast thou made my tongue to cleave to its root. Little did I consider the preciousness of souls, or the tremendous account to be giveh for them, at the appearing of the great Shepherd. I have now time enough to sit down and mourn over lost opportunities. Lord, restore me once again to a serviceable capacity, to a larger sphere of activity for thee, for I am now become as a broken vessel. It grieves me to the heart to see thy flock scattered; to hear the people cry to me, as once to Joseph, "Give us bread; for why should we die in thy presence?" The word is like fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing. O that thou wouldest once again open the doors of thine house, that there may be bread enough in thine house for all thy children!

CHAPTER XI.

On the Corruption of the Seed before it springs.

Observation.—AFTER the seed is committed to the earth, it seems to perish and die, as our Saviour speaks, John xii. 24; "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The death of the corn in the earth is not a total death, but only the corruption or alteration of it;

for if once the seminal life and virtue of it were quite extinguished, it could neither put forth blade or ear without a miracle. Yet because that alteration is a kind of death, therefore Christ here uses it as a fit illustration of the resurrection. And indeed there is nothing in nature more suitable to illustrate that great mystery. What a fragrant, green, and beautiful blade do we see spring up from a corrupted seed! How black and mouldy is that! How beautiful and verdant is this!

Application.—Even thus shall the bodies of the saints arise in beauty and glory at the resurrection: “They are sown in dishonor; they are raised in glory; they are sown natural bodies; they are raised spiritual bodies.” The husbandman knows, that though the seed rot in the earth, yet it will rise again, and the believer knows, “that though after his skin worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he shall see God.” And the resemblance betwixt the seed sown and springing up, and the bodies of the saints dying and rising again, lies in these following particulars—

1. The seed is committed to the earth from whence it came; so is the body of a saint; earth it was, and to earth it is again resolved. Grace exempts not the body of the best man from seeing corruption. Though Christ be in him, yet the body is dead; that is, sentenced to death because of sin. It is appointed unto all men once to die.”

2. The seed is cast into the earth in hope. Were there not a resurrection of it expected, the husbandman would never be willing to cast away his corn. The bodies of saints are also committed to the grave in hope. “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, as they which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him,” 1 Thess. iv. 13. This blessed hope of a resurrection sweetens not only the troubles of life, but the pangs of death.

3. The seed is cast into the earth seasonably, in its proper season: so are the bodies of the saints, “Thou shall come to thy grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season.” They always die in the fittest,

time, though sometimes they seem to die immaturely. The time of their death was from all eternity prefixed by God, beyond which they cannot go, and short of which they cannot come.

4. The seed lies many days and nights under the clods, before it rise and appear again : "Even so man lieth down, and riseth not again until the heavens be no more," Job xiv. 12. The days of darkness in the grave are many.

5. When the time is come for its shooting up, the earth that covered it can hide it no longer; it cannot keep it down a day more; it will find or make its way through the clods. So in that day when the great trump shall sound, bone shall come to its bone, and the grave shall not be able to hold them a minute longer.

6. When the seed appears above-ground, it appears much more fresh, than when it was cast into the earth. God clothes it with such beauty, that it is not like what it was before. Thus rise the bodies of the saints, marvellously improved, beautified, and perfected with spiritual qualities and rich endowments; wherefore they are called "spiritual bodies," not properly, but analogically, spiritual; for as spirits subsist without food, raiment, sleep, know no lassitude, weariness, or pain; so our bodies, after the resurrection, shall be above these necessities and distempers; for we shall be as the angels of God. Yea, our vile bodies shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body; which is the highest pitch and ascent of glory and honor that a human body is capable of. Indeed, the glory of the soul shall be the greatest glory; that is the orient invaluable gem; but God will bestow a distinct glory upon the body, and richly enamel the very case in which that precious jewel shall be kept. In the glorious morning of the resurrection, the saints shall put on their new fresh suits of flesh, richly laid and trimmed with glory. Those bodies, which in the grave were but dust and rottenness, when it delivers them back again, shall be shining and excellent pieces, absolutely and everlasting freed from all natural infirmities and distempers. Death is their good physician, which at once frees them from all diseases. It is a great affliction now to many of the Lord's people, to be clogged with so many bodily in-

firmities, which render them very unserviceable to God. “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” But though the soul pays now a dear rent for the tabernacle in which it dwells; yet when death dissolves that tabernacle, all the diseases and pains under which it groaned, shall be buried in the rubbish of its mortality; and when they come to be re-united again, God will bestow rich gifts, even upon the body, in the day of its re-espousals to the soul.—Then the body shall be freed from all natural necessities, to which it is now subjected in this its animal state. How is the soul now disquieted and tortured with cares and troubles to provide for a perishing body! Many unbelieving and unbecoming fears is it now vexed with; what shall it eat? and what shall it drink? and wherewithal shall it be clothed? “*But meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; God shall destroy both it and them,*” as to their present use and office.—Our bodies shall be freed from death, to which henceforth they can be subject no more; that formidable adversary of nature shall assault them no more. “*For they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more;* for they shall be equal to the “angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection,” Luke xx. 35; not that they shall be separate and single spirits, without bodies as the angels are; but equal to them in the way and manner of their living and acting. The body shall be perfectly subdued to the spirit. Lord, what hast thou prepared for them that love thee!

Reflections.—If I shall receive my body again so dignified and improved in the world to come, then, Lord, let me never be unwilling to use my body now for the interest of thy glory, or my own salvation. O my God, it grieves me to think how many precious opportunities of serving and honouring thee I have lost, under pretence of endangering my health. I have been more solicitous to live long and healthfully, than to live usefully and fruitfully; and, likely enough, my life had been more serviceable to thee, if it had not been so fondly overvalued by me. Foolish soul! has God given thee a body for a living tool or

instrument? and art thou afraid to use it? Wherein is the mercy of having a body, if not in spending and wearing it out in the service of God? To have an active vigorous body, and not to employ and exercise it for God, for fear of endangering its health, is, as if one should give thee a handsome and sprightly horse, upon condition thou shouldst not ride or work him. O if some of the saints had enjoyed the blessing of such a healthy active body as mine, what excellent services would they have performed to God in it!

If my body shall as surely rise again in glory, vigor, and excellent endowments, as the seed which I sow does; why, says another, should not this comfort me under all the pains, weaknesses, and dulness, with which my soul is now clogged? Thou knowest, my God, what a grief it has been to my soul, to be fettered and entangled with the distempers and manifold indispositions of this vile body. It has made me sigh, and say with holy Anselm, when he saw the mounting bird weighed down by the stone hanging at her leg, "Lord, thus it fares with the soul of thy servant. Fain would I serve, glorify, and enjoy thee, but a distempered body will not let me." However, it is reviving to think, that though I am now forced to crawl, like a worm, in the discharge of my duties, I shall shortly fly like a seraph in the execution of thy will. Cheer up, drooping soul; the time is at hand when thou shalt be made more willing than thou now art, and thy flesh not so weak as now it is.

And is it so indeed? Then let the dying saint rouse up himself upon his bed, like Jacob, and encourage himself against the fears of death by this refreshing consideration. Let him say with holy dying Musculus, "Why tremblest thou, O my soul, to go forth out of this tabernacle to the land of rest? Has thy body been such a pleasant habitation to thee, that thou shouldest be so loth to part with it, though but for a time, and with assurance of receiving it again with such a glorious improvement?" I know, O my soul, that thou hast a natural inclination to this body, resulting from the dear and strict union which God himself has made betwixt thee and it; yea, even the holiest of men sometimes feel the like in themselves; but

beware that thou love it not immoderately or inordinately. It is but a creature, how ~~dear~~ ^{dear} ever it be to thee; yea, a fading creature, and that which now stands in thy way to the full enjoyment of God. But say, my soul, why are the thoughts of parting with it so burdensome to thee? Why so loth to take death by its cold hand? Is this body thy old and dear friend? True, but yet thou partest not with it upon such sad terms, as should deserve a tear at parting. For mayest thou not say of this departure; as Paul at the departure of Onesimus? "It therefore departeth for a season, that thou mayest receive it for ever." The day of re-spousals will quickly come; and in the mean time, as thy body will not be sensible of the tedious length of interposing time, so neither wilt thou be solicitous about thine absent friend; for the fruition of God in thine unodied state, shall fill thee with infinite satisfaction and rest. Or is it not so much simply for parting with it that thou carest, as for the manner of thy parting, either by the slow and lingering approaches of a natural; or the quick and terrible approaches of a violent death? Trouble not thyself about that; for if God lead thee through the long dark lane of a tedious sickness, yet at the end of it is thy Father's house. And as for a violent death, it is not so material whether friends or enemies stand weeping or triumphing over thy dead body. When thy soul shall be in heaven, it will not be sensible how the body is used on earth.

But O, says the ungodly sinner, what an uncomfortable parting will mine be! and how much more sad our meeting again! How will this soul and body blush, yea, tremble when they meet, who have been co-partners in so much guilt! I damned my soul to please my flesh, and now I have ruined both thereby. Had I denied my flesh to serve Christ, worn out my body in the service of my soul, I had thereby happily provided for them both; but I began at the wrong end, and so have ruined both eternally.

CHAPTER XII.

On the Resemblance of Wheat and Tares.

Observation.—It is Jerome's observation, that wheat and tares are so much alike in their first springing up, that it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish the one from the other. "The difference," says he, "between them, is either none at all; or wonderfully difficult to be discerned which those words of Christ, in Mat. xiii. 30. plainly confirm; "Let them alone till the harvest;" thereby intimating both the difficulty of distinguishing the tares from the wheat, as also the unwarrantable rashness of bold and hasty censures of men's sincerity or hypocrisy.

Application.—How difficult soever it may be to discern the difference betwixt wheat and tares, yet doubtless the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them than the most quick and piercing eye of man can discern the difference betwixt special and common grace; for all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites, which a spiritual and very judicious eye may easily mistake for the saving and genuine effects of the sanctifying Spirit.

Does the Spirit of God convince the consciences of his people of the evil of sin? Hypocrites have their convictions too. "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you," Exod. x. 16. Thus was Saul also convinced; 1 Sam. xv. 24.

Does true compunction work reformation of life in the people of God? Even hypocrites also have been famous for their reformations. The unclean spirit often goes out of the formal hypocrite, by an external reformation; and yet still retains his propensity in them. Many that will never escape the damnation of hell, have yet escaped the pollutions of the world; and that by the knowledge of the Son of God; 2 Pet. ii. 21.

Does the Spirit of the Lord produce the glorious and supernatural work of faith in convinced and humbled souls? In this also the hypocrite imitates the believer.

"Then Simon himself believed also," Acts viii. 13. "These are they which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away," Luke viii. 13.

Does the precious eye of faith, discovering the transcendent excellencies that are in Christ, inflame the affections of the believing soul with vehement desires and longings after him? Strange motions of heart have also been found in hypocrites towards Christ and heavenly things. "Lord, evermore give us this bread," John vi. 34. With what a rapture was Balasam transported, when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and my last end be like his!"

Does the work of faith, in some believers, bear upon its top branches the full ripe fruit of a blessed assurance? Lo! what strong confidences and high-built persuasions of an interest in God, have sometimes been found even in the unsanctified! Yea, so strong may this false assurance be, that they dare boldly venture to go to the judgment-seat of God, and there defend it. "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" Mat. vii. 22.

Does the Spirit of God fill the heart of the assured believer with joy unspeakable and full of glory, giving him through faith, a foretaste of heaven itself in those first fruits of it? How near to this comes that which the apostle supposes may be found even in apostates, who are said "to taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." If real Christians delight in ordinances, those that are not real Christians may also delight in approaching to God, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. You will say, perhaps, though the difference be not easily discernible in their active obedience, yet when it shall come to suffering, there every eye may discern it; the false heart will then fail. And yet even this is no infallible rule; for the apostle supposes, that the salamander of hypocrisy may live in the very flames of martyrdom; "If I give my body to be burnt, and have not charity."

And this difference will yet be more subtle and discernible, if I should tell you; that as in so many things the hypocrite resembles the saint, so there are other things which a real Christian may act too like a hypocrite. When we find a Pharaoh confessing, a Herod practising

as well as hearing, a Judas preaching Christ, and an Alexander venturing his life for Paul; and, on the other side, shall find a David condemning that in another which he practised himself; a Hezekiah glorying in his riches, a Peter dissembling; and even all the disciples forsaking Christ in an hour of trouble and danger; O then how hard is it for the eye of man to discern betwixt chaff and wheat! How many upright hearts are now censured, whom God will clear! How many false hearts are now approved, whom God will condemn! Men have ordinarily no clear proofs, but only probable symptoms, which, at most, can beget but a conjectural knowledge of another's state; and they that shall peremptorily judge either way, may possibly wrong the generation of the upright; or, on the other side, absolve and justify the wicked. And truly it is no great wonder that dangerous mistakes are so frequently made in this matter. But though man cannot, the Lord both can and will perfectly discriminate them. "The Lord knoweth who are his." He will have a day perfectly to sever the tares from the wheat, to melt off the varnish of the most resplendent and refined hypocrite, and to blow off the ashes of infirmities which have covered and obscured the very sparks of sincerity in his people. He will make such a division as was never yet made in the world, how many divisions soever there have been in it. "And then shall men indeed return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; betwixt him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." Meanwhile, my soul, thou canst not better employ thyself, whether thou be sounder or unsound, than in making those reflections upon thyself.

"*Reflections.*"—And is this so? Then, Lord, pardon the rashness and precipitancy of my censorious spirit; for I have often boldly anticipated thy judgment, and assumed thy prerogative, although thou hast said, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? And why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. Let us not therefore judge one, another any more," Rom. xiv. 10. And again; "He that judgeth the

is the Lord. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God," 1 Cor. iv. 4. What, if God will own some of them for his sons, to whom I refuse to give the respect of brethren? I may pass hasty censures upon others; but where is my commission for so doing? I want not only a commission but fit qualifications, for such a work as this. Can I pierce into the heart as God can? Can I infallibly discover the hidden motives, ends, and principles of actions? Besides, O my soul, thou art conscious of so much falseness in thyself, that were there no other consideration, that alone might restrain thee from all uncharitable and hasty censures. If others knew but what I know of myself, would they not judge as severely of me as I do of others?

Though I may not judge the final state of another, yet I may and ought to judge the state of my own soul. For since every saving grace in a Christian has its counterfeit in the hypocrite, how needful is it for thee, O my soul, to make a stand here, and solemnly to ponder this question, Whether those things, whereon I depend, as my best evidences for the life to come, be the real or only the common works of the Spirit? Whether they may be such as can now endure the test of the word, and abide a fair trial at the bar of my own conscience?

Come then, my soul, set the Lord before thee, to whom the secrets of all hearts are manifest; and in the awful prospect of that great day, make true answer to these heart-discovering queries; for though thou canst not discern the difference betwixt these things in another, yet thou mayest and oughtest to discern it in thyself; for "what man, knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him?"

Is my obedience uniform? Am I the same man at all times, places, and companies? Or, rather, am I not exact and curious in open and public, remiss and careless in private and secret, duties?

Does that which I call grace in me, oppose and mortify, or does it not rather quietly consist with and pro-

tect my lusts and corruptions? True grace tolerates no lust; Gal. v. 17; no, not the bosom, darling corruptions; Psal. xviii. 23.

Does that which I call my grace, humble, empty, and abase my soul? Or does it not rather puff it up with self-conceitedness? All saving grace is humbling grace; I Cor. xv. 10; "But the soul which is lifted up, is not upright," Hab. ii. 4.

Canst thou, my soul, rejoice and bless God for the grace imparted to others? and rejoice if any design for Christ be carried on in the world by other hands? Or, rather, dost thou not envy those that excel thee, and carest for no work in which thou art not seen?

But stay, my soul, it is enough. If these be the substantial differences betwixt special and common grace, I more than doubt that I shall not endure the day of his coming "Whose fan is in his hand." Do not those spots appear upon me, which are not the spots of his children? Who is me poor wretch! The characters of death are upon my soul. Lord, add power to the form, life to the name to live, practice to the knowledge, or I perish eternally. O give me the saint's heart, rather than the angel's tongue; the poorest breathing of the Spirit than the richest ornaments of common gifts! Let me never deceive myself or others in matters of such deep and everlasting consequence.

CHAPTER XIII.

On the Dangers incident to Corn from Seed-time to Harvest.

Observation—THERE are three critical and dangerous periods between seed-time and harvest. The first, when corn is newly committed to the earth; all that lies uncovered is quickly picked up by the birds; and much of that which is but slightly covered, is plucked up, as soon as it begins to sprout, by devouring birds; but if it escapes the birds, and gets root in the earth, yet then it is hazarded by noxious weeds which purloin and

suck away its nourishment, whilst it is yet in the tender blade. If by the care of the vigilant husbandman it be freed from choaking weeds, yet as great a danger as any of the former still attends it; for oftentimes, whilst it is blowing in the ear, blastings and mildews smite it in the stalk, and cuts off the juice and sap that should ascend to nourish the ear, and so shrivels and dries up the grain whilst it is yet forming; whereby it becomes like those ears of corn in Pharaoh's vision, which were thin and blasted with the east-wind; or like the ears which the psalmist speaks of upon the hoist top, wherewith the reaper filleth not his arms.

Application.—True grace also meets with three dangerous periods which marvellously hazard it; so that it is a much greater wonder that it ever arrives at its perfection. No sooner has the great husbandman disseminated the holy seeds in the regenerate heart, than multitudes of impetuous corruptions immediately assault and would certainly devour them, like the fowls of the air, did not the same arm that sowed them, also protect them. It fares with grace, as with Christ its Author, whom Herod sought to destroy in his very infancy. The new creature is scarcely born, before it must fight to defend itself. This conflict is excellently set forth in Gal. v. 17; “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

By “the flesh” understand the corruption of nature and the sinful motions thereof; by “the Spirit,” not the soul or natural spirit of man, but the Spirit of God in man, namely, those graces in man which are the workmanship of the Spirit, and therefore called by his name. The opposition betwixt these two is expressed by lusting, that is, desiring the mutual ruin and destruction of each other. There are two contrary principles in every saint. Hence opposition must needs follow. Sin and grace are so opposite, that if sin should cease to oppose grace, it would cease to be sin; and if grace should cease to oppose sin, it would cease to be grace. And this endangers the work of grace much more than any other enemy, because it works against it more inwardly, constantly, and advantageously, than any thing else can do—more.

inwardly, for it has its being and working in the same soul, where grace dwells, yea, in the self-same faculties, so that we cannot do the good, nor yet the evil that we would; nor the good that we would, because when the Spirit moves to good, and beats upon the heart by divine pulsations, exciting it to duty, the flesh crosses and opposes it there; and if it cannot totally hinder the performance of a duty, yet it weakens the soul, and thus the performance is not so spiritual, free, and composed, as it desires; nor yet can we do the evil that we should commit, if grace were not there; because when lust stirs, in its first motions, grace puts an obstacle in its way, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And if it does not, as it usually does, hinder the acting of sin, yet it so engages the will against it, that it is not committed with complacency and full consent, "What I do, I allow not? It opposes it more constantly; it is like a continual dropping; a man can never move far from this enemy, than from himself. There is a time when the devil leaves tempting, but no time when corruption ceases from working. And it opposes grace more advantageously than any other enemy can do, for it is not only always in the same soul with it, but it is there naturally; it has the advantage of the soil which suits it. And yet, O the wonder of free grace! it is not swallowed up in victory, but it escapes this hazard.

2. It soon meets with another, though it escapes this danger, even temptations which strike desperately at the very life of it; for these, like the weeds, with seemingly-loving embraces clasp about it; and did not the faithful God now make a way to escape, instead of a harvest; we should have a heap. For, alas, what are we to wrestle with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places?

3. Sad relapses, like blasts, often greatly endanger it, when it is even ready for the harvest. Thus it fell out with David, whose last days were not like his first. And yet these holy fruits are not utterly destroyed, because true grace is the seed of God, and so immortal; 1 John v. 4; and also because the promises of perseverance and victory made to it, cannot be frustrated; amongst which

these are excellent, Isa. liv. 10, Jer. xxxiv. 40; 1 Cor. i. 8; Peal i. 3; cxxv. 1; John iv. 15. And here is matter of unspeakable comfort. Though the flesh say, "I will fail thee;" though the world say, "I will deceive thee;" though the devil say, "I will snatch thee away;" yet as long as Christ says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," thy graces are secure in the midst of all these enemies.

Reflections.—This soul of mine, says the apostle, was once plowed up by conviction, and sown, as I thought, with the seed of God. In those days many purposes and good resolutions began to bud forth, promising a blessed harvest; but (O with what consternation and horror should I speak it) the cares and pleasures of this life, the lusts and corruptions of my base heart springing up, have quite destroyed and choaked it; and now my expected harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. I had convictions, but they are gone; troubles for sin, conscience of duties, but all are blasted, and my soul is now as a barren field which God hath cursed.

Wo is me! I have revolted from God, and now that dreadful threatening is evidently fulfilled upon me; "I am like the heath in the desert, that seeth not when good cometh; my soul inhabits the parched places of the wilderness."—Wretched soul! thy case is sad; it will be better with the uncultivated wilderness, than with such a miscarrying soul, unless the great Husbandman plow thee up the second time, and sow thy heart with better seed.

And are the corruptions of my heart to grace, asks the careless soul; what fowls, weeds, and mildews, are to the corn? O what need have I then to watch my heart, and keep it with all diligence; for in the life of that grace is wrapt up the life of my soul! He that carries a candle in his hand, in a blustering stormy night, had need to cover it close, lest it be blown out and he be left in darkness. O let me never say, "God has promised it shall persevere, and therefore I need not be so solicitous to preserve it;" for as this inference is quite opposite to the nature of true grace and assurance, which never encourage to carelessness, but excite the soul to an indus-

trious use of means to preserve it ; so it is in itself an irrational and senseless conclusion, which will never follow from any scripture-promise ; for although it is readily granted, that God has made many comfortable and sweet promises to the grace of his people, yet we must expect to enjoy the benefits and blessings of all these promises, in that way and order in which God has promised them ; and that is in the careful and diligent use of those means which he hath prescribed. Promises do not exclude, but imply, the use of means ; *Acts xxvii. 31.* I know my life is determined to a day, to an hour, and I shall live out every minute God has appointed ; but yet I am bound to provide food, raiment, and physic, to preserve it.

Let all doubting Christians reflect seriously upon this truth, and draw marrow and fatness out of it to strengthen and establish them against all their fears. Your life, your spiritual life, has for many years hung in suspense before you ; and you have often said with David, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." Desponding, trembling soul, lift up thine eyes, and look upon the fields ; the corn lives still, and grows up, though birds have watched to devour it. Snows have covered it, beasts have cropped it, weeds have almost choaked it ; yet it is preserved. And has not God more care of that precious seed of his own Spirit in thee, than any husbandman has of his corn ? Has he not said, that having begun the good work in thee, he will perfect it to the day of Christ ? Has he not said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish ?" Hast thou not many times said and thought of thy soul as thou dost now ? and yet it lives. O what matter of unspeakable joy and comfort is this to upright souls ! Well then, be not discouraged, for thou dost not run as one uncertain, nor fight as one that beats the air ; but "the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." Though thy grace be weak, thy God is strong. Though the stream sometimes seems to fail, yet it is fed by an ever-flowing fountain.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the Patience of the Husbandman.

Observation.—THE expectation of a good harvest at last, makes the husbandman, with untired patience, endure all his labors. “He that plows, plows in hope;” And he is not so irrational as to think he shall presently be partaker of his hope, nor so foolish as to anticipate the harvest, by cutting down his corn before it be fully ripe; but is content to plow, sow, and weed it, and when it is fully ripe, then he goes forth into his fields, and reaps it down with joy.

Application.—Can a little corn cause men to endure so many difficult labors, and make them wait with invincible patience till the reaping-time come? Much more should the expectation of eternal glory steel and fortify my spirit against all hardships and difficulties. It least of all becomes a christian to be of an impatient spirit. “Behold the husbandman waiteth;” let me also wait.

There are three great arguments to persuade Christians to a long-suffering and patient frame under sufferings.

1. The example of Christ. To think how quietly he suffered all injuries and difficulties, is sufficient to shame the best of Christians. I have read of one Elezarius, a nobleman, who, when his wife wondered at his exceeding great patience in bearing injuries, thus answered her; “You know that my heart is sometimes ready to rise with indignation against such as wrong me; but I presently begin to think of the wrongs that Christ suffered; and say thus to myself—Although thy servant should smite thee on thy face, this were nothing to what the Lord suffered. He suffered more and greater things; and I never leave off thinking on the injuries done to my Saviour, till my mind is still and quiet.”

2. The desert of sin. “Why doth a living man complain?” When sin lies heavy, affliction lies light. When the duke of Condé had voluntarily entered into the inconveniences of religious poverty and retirement, he was one day seen and pitied by a lord of Italy, who, out of

tenderness, wished him to be more careful of his person. The good duke answered, "Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I am ill provided for; for I send a harbinger before me, that makes ready my lodgings, and takes care that I be royally entertained." The lord asked him who this harbinger was. He answered, "The knowledge of myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins; and when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, how unprovided soever I find it, methinks it is better than I deserve."

3. And as the sense of sin sweetens present difficulties, so do the expectations and hopes of a blessed harvest and reward in heaven. This made Abraham willing to wander up and down, many years as a stranger in the world; for "he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The hope of such a harvest is encouragement enough to work hard, and wait long. Yet some Christians are so impatient of it, that they would fain be reaping before the time; but as God has, by an unalterable law of nature, appointed both the seasons of seed-time and harvest, which are therefore called "the appointed weeks of the harvest," and these cannot be hastened; so is it in reference to our spiritual harvest; we are appointed to labor in the use of all God's appointments; and when we have done all, must patiently wait till the divine decrees be accomplished, and the time of the promise be fully come. "In due time we shall reap, if we faint not." To which patient expectation and quiet waiting for the glory to come, these following considerations may be of use—

1. As the husbandman knows when the seed-time is past, it will not be long to the harvest, and the longer he waits, the nearer still it is; so the Christian knows, that "it is but yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry;" and "that now his salvation is nearer than when he first believed." What a small point of time is our waiting-time compared with eternity! Yet a few days more, and then comes the long expected and welcome harvest.

2. The husbandman can find other work to do before the reaping time comes; he needs not stand idle, though he cannot yet reap. And cannot a Christian find any work

to do for God till he come to heaven ? O there is much work to do ; and such work as is proper to this season ! You may now reprove sin, exhort to duty, succor the distressed. This is good work, and this is your only time for such work ; the whole of eternity will be taken up in other employments. "I think it meet," says Peter, "as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir up your minds, knowing shortly that I must put off this tabernacle ;" I know I have but a little time to work among you ; I am almost in heaven ; and therefore am willing to husband this present moment as well as I can for you. O Christians, you need not stand idle. Look round about you upon the multitude of forlorn sinners. Speak now to them for God ; speak now to God for them ; for shortly you shall so speak no more ; you shall see them no more till you see them at Christ's bar. God leaves you here for their sakes ; up and be doing. If you had done all you were to do for yourselves and them, he would have you to heaven immediately ; you should not wait a moment longer for your glory.

3. Husbandmen know that though they cannot yet gather in the precious fruits of the earth, yet all this while they are ripening and preparing for the harvest. And is not this also my preparation-time for glory ? As God prepared heaven for his people by an act of creation, Heb. xi. 10 ; by the death of Christ, who made a purchase of it, Heb. x. 19 ; and by his ascension into it, John xiv. 2 ; so the reason why we are kept here, is in order to our being fitted for it. Heaven is ready, but we are not fully ready ; the barn is fit to receive the corn, but the corn is not fit to be gathered into it. "But for this self-same thing God is now working in us ;" he is every day at work by ordinances, and by providences, to perfect his work in us ; and as soon as that is finished, we shall hear a voice like that in Rev. xi. 12. "Come up hither," and immediately we shall be in the spirit ; for how ardently soever we long for that desirable day, Christ longs for it more than we can do.

4. The husbandman is glad of the first-fruits ; they encourage him, though the greatest part be yet out. And have not you received the first-fruits of glory ? Have you not earnest, pledges, and first-fruits of it ? 'Tis your own

fault, if every day you feed not upon such blessed comforts of the Spirit. O how might the interposing time, even all the "days" of your patience here, be sweetened with such foretastes of the glory to come!

5: Husbandmen know it is best to reap when it is fit to reap ; one handful fully ripe is worth many sheaves of green corn. And you know that heaven will be sweetest to you when you are fittest for it. The child would pluck the apple whilst it is green, but he might gather it easier and taste it sweeter, by tarrying longer for it. When we have a taste of heaven, we are all in haste to be gone. Then, "O that I had wings as a dove ! I would fly away and be at rest." But, as God has contrived our glory in the best of ways, so he has appointed for us the fittest of seasons ; and whenever we are gathered into glory, we shall come as a shock of corn in its season.

Reflections.—I have waited for thy salvation, O God ! Having received thy first-fruits, my soul longs to fill its bosom with the full ripe sheaves of glory. "As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul for thee, O God." O when shall I come and appear before God ? I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. When shall I see that most lovely face ? When shall I hear his soul-transporting voice ? Some need patience to die : I need it as much to live. The sight of thee, O God, by faith, has made this world a burden, this body a burden. The husbandman longs for his harvest, because it is the reward of all his toil and labor ; but what is his harvest to mine ? What is a little corn to the enjoyment of God ? What is the joy of harvest to the joy of heaven ? What are the shoutings of men in the fields, to the acclamations of glorified spirits in the kingdom of God ? Lord, I have gone forth, bearing more precious seed than they ; when shall I return rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me ? Their harvest comes when they receive their corn ; mine comes when I leave it. O much desired day ! O day of gladness of heart ! How long, Lord ? How long ? Here I wait as the poor man at Bethesda's pool, looking when my turn will come, but every one steps into heaven before me. Yet Lord, I am content to wait till my time is fully come. I would be content to stay for my glorification till

I have finished the work of my generation; and when I have done the will of God, then to receive the promise. If thou have any work on earth to employ me in, I am content to abide. Behold, the husbandman waiteth, and so will I; for thou art a God of judgment; and blessed are all they that wait for thee.

But how does my slothful soul sink down into the flesh, says another, and settle itself in the love of this animal life! How does it wrap up itself in the garment of this mortality, not desiring to be removed hence to the more perfect and blessed state! The husbandman is indeed content to stay till the appointed weeks of the harvest; but would he be content to wait always? O my sensual heart, is this life of hope as contentful to thee as the life of vision will be? Why dost thou not groan within thyself, that this mortality might be swallowed up of life? Do not the scriptures describe the saints by their earnest "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life?" "by their hastening unto the coming of the day of God?" What is the reason that my heart hangs back? Does guilt lie upon my conscience? Or, have I got into a pleasant condition in the world, which makes me say as Peter on the mount, "It is good to be here?" Or want I the assurance of a better state? Must God make all my earthly comforts die, before I shall be willing to die? Awake faith, awake love. Rouse the drowsy desires of my soul, that I may say, "Make haste my beloved, and come away."

CHAPTER XV.

On the Harvest-Season.

Observation.—WHEN the fields are white to harvest, then the husbandmen walk through them, rub the ears, and finding the grain full and solid, they presently prepare their scythes and sickles, send for their harvest-men, who quickly reap and mow the corn; and after these follow

the binders, who tie it up ; from the field where it grew, it is carried to the barn, where it is threshed out, the good grain gathered into a heap, the chaff separated and burnt, or thrown to the dunghill. How bare and naked do the fields look after harvest, which before were pleasant to behold ! When the harvest-men enter into the field, it is, before them, like the garden of Eden, and behind them a desolate wilderness ; and, in some places, it is usual to set fire to the dry stubble when the corn is housed, which rages furiously, and covers all the field with ashes.

Application.—The application of this, I find made to my hands by Christ himself. “The field is the world ; the good seed are the children of the kingdom ; the tares are the children of the wicked one ; the enemy that sowed them is the devil ; the harvest is the end of the world ; the reapers are the angels.”

The field is the world ; there both the godly and ungodly live and grow together, until they are both ripe ; and then they shall both be reaped down by death : death is the sickle that reaps down both. I will open this allegory in the following particulars —

1. In a catching harvest, when the husbandman sees the clouds begin to gather and grow black, he hurries in his corn with all possible haste, and houses it day and night. So does God, the great Husbandman. He hurries the saints into their graves when judgments are coming upon the world. “The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart ; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come,” Isa. lvii. 1. Methuselah died the year before the flood ; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo ; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelberg ; Luther a little before the wars broke out in Germany. But what speak I of single saints ? Sometimes the Lord houses great numbers together, before some sweeping judgment comes. The Lord sees it better for them to be under-ground, than above-ground ; and therefore, by a merciful providence, removes them out of harm’s way.

2. Neither the corn nor the tares can possibly resist the sharp and keen sickle, when it is applied to them by the reaper’s hand ; neither can the godly or ungodly resist

the stroke of death when God inflicts it. "No man can keep alive his own soul in the day of death ; and there is no discharge in that war." The frail body of man is as unequal to withstand that stroke, as the weak reeds or feeble stalks of the corn are to resist the keen scythe and sharp sickle.

3. The reapers receive the wheat which they cut down into their arms and bosom. Hence that expression by way of imprecation upon the wicked, "Let them be as the grass upon the house top, which withers before it grows up ; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves, his bosom," Psal. cxix. 6. Such withered grass are the wicked, who are never taken into the reaper's bosom ; but as soon as saints are cut down by death, they fall into the hands and bosoms of the angels of God, who bear them in their arms and bosoms to God their father. For as those blessed spirits did exceedingly rejoice at their conversion, and thought it no dishonor to minister to them, whilst they stood in the field, so when they are cut down by death, they will rejoice to be their convoy to heaven.

4. When the corn and weeds are reaped and mowed down, they shall never grow any more in the field ; neither shall we ever return to live an animal life any more after death. "As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away ; so he that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more ; he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more," Job vii. 9.

5. The reapers are never sent to cut down the harvest until it be fully ripe ; neither will God reap down saints or sinners until they be come to a maturity of grace or wickedness. Saints are not reaped down until their grace is ripe. "Thou shalt come to thy grave "in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in its season." "Not that every godly man dies in such a full old age," says Caryl, "but yet, in one sense, it is a universal truth and never fulfilled ; for whosoever they die, they die in a good age ; yea, though they die in the spring and flower of their youth, they die in a good old age ; that is, they are ripe for death whenever they die. Whenever a godly man dies, it is harvest-time with him, though in a natural capacity

he be cut down while he is green, and cropped in the bud or blossom; yet in his spiritual capacity he never dies before he be ripe. God ripens him speedily, when he intends to take him out of the world speedily. He can let out such warm rays and beams of his Spirit upon him, as shall soon mature the seeds of grace into a preparedness for glory."

The wicked also have their ripening-time for hell and judgment. "God does with much long-suffering endure the vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction." Of their ripeness for judgment the scripture often speaks. "The sin of the Amorites is not yet full," Gen. xv. 16. And of Babylon it is said; "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness," Jer. li. 13. It is worth remarking, that the measure of the sin, and the end of the sinner, come together. Now, as husbandmen judge of the ripeness of their harvest; by the color and hardness of the grain; so may we judge of the ripeness both of saints and sinners, for heaven or hell, by these following signs.—

Signs of the maturity of grace.—1. When the corn is nearly ripe, it bows the head, and stoops lower than when it was green. When the people of God are nearly ripe for heaven, they grow more humble and self-denying, than in the days of their first profession. The longer a saint grows in the world, the better he is acquainted with his own heart and his obligations to God; both which are very humbling things. Paul had one foot in heaven, when he called himself the chief of sinners, and least of saints. A Christian in the progress of his knowledge and grace, is like a vessel cast into the sea, the more it fills, the deeper it sinks. "Those that went to study at Athens," says Plutarch, "at first coming seemed to themselves to be wise men; afterwards only lovers of wisdom; and after that, only rhetoricians, such as could speak wisdom, but knew little of it; and last of all, ideots in their own apprehensions; still, with the increase of learning, laying aside their pride and arrogancy."

2. When harvest is nigh, the grain is more solid and pithy than ever it was before; green corn is soft and spungy, but ripe corn is substantial and weighty. So it

is with Christians. The affections of a young Christian are perhaps more sprightly; but those of a grown Christian are more judicious and solid. "Their love to Christ abounds more and more in all judgment." The limbs of a child are more active and pliable; but as he grows up to a perfect state, the parts are more consolidated and firmly knit. The fingers of an old musician are not so nimble; but he has a more judicious ear in music than in his youth.

3. When corn is dead ripe, it is apt to fall of its own accord to the ground, and there shed; whereby it does, as it were, anticipate the harvest-man, and calls upon him to put in the sickle. Not unlike to which are the lookings and longings, the groanings and hastenings of Christians for their expected glory. "They hasten to the coming of the Lord," or, as Montanus more fitly renders it, "they hasten the coming of the Lord;" that is, they are urgent and instant in their desires and cries to hasten his coming; their desires sally forth to meet the Lord; they willingly take death by the hand. As the corn bends to the earth, so do these souls to heaven.

Signs of the maturity of sin.—1. When conscience is grown past feeling, having no remorse for sin; when it ceases to check, reprove, and smite, for sin; the day of that sinner is at hand, his harvest is even come. The greatest violation of conscience is the greatest of sins. This was the case of the forlorn Gentiles, among whom Satan had such a plentiful harvest; the patience of God suffered them to grow till their consciences were grown seared and past feeling. When a member is so mortified, that if you lance and cut it ever so much, no blood appears, nor does the man feel any pain, then it is time to cut it off.

2. When men give themselves over to the indulgence of their lusts, to commit sin with greediness, then are they grown to a maturity of sin. When men have slipped the reins of conscience, and rush headlong into all impiety, then the last sands of God's patience are running down. Thus Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, gave themselves over to wickedness and strange sins; and then justice quickly gave them up for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

3. That man is ripe for hell, who is become a contriver of sin, a designer, a student, in wickedness. One would think it strange that any man should set his invention on work upon such a subject as sin is, that any should study to become a dexterous artist this way; and yet the scripture frequently speaks of such, "whose bellies prepare deceit," Job xv. 35; "who travail in pain to bring forth" this deformed birth, ver. 20; "who wink with their eyes," whilst plotting wickedness as men do when they are most intent on the study of any knotty problem, Prov. vi. 13. These have so much of hell already in them, that they are more than half in hell already.

4. He that from a forward professor is turned a bitter persecutor, is also within a few steps of hell. The contempt of his light the Lord has already punished upon him, in his obduracy and madness against the light. Reader, if thou art gone thus far, thou art gone almost beyond hope of recovery. Towards other sinners God usually exercises more patience, but with such as thee he makes short work. When Judas turns traitor to his Lord, he is quickly sent to his own place. Such as are again intangled and overcome of those lusts they once seemed to have clean escaped, these bring upon themselves swift damnation, and their judgment lingers not.

5. He that can endure no reproof or control in the way of his sin, but derides all counsel, and, like a strong current, rages at and sweeps away all obstacles in his way, will quickly fall into the dead lake. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." This is a death-spot, a hell-spot, wherever it appears. From this very symptom the prophet plainly predicted the approaching ruin of Amaziah; "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my voice," 2 Chron. xxv. 16. He that will not be timely counselled, shall be quickly destroyed.

6. When a man comes to glory in his sin," and boast of his wickedness, then it is time to cut him down; "whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame." This is a braving, a daring, of God to his face; and with whomsoever he bears long, these are none of them.

You see now what are the signs of a ripe sinner ; and when it comes to this, either with a nation, or with a single person, then ruin is near. It is in the filling up of the measure of sin, as in the filling up of a vessel cast into the sea, which rolls from side to side, taking in the water by little and little till it be full, and then down it sinks to the bottom. Mean while, admirable is divine patience, which bears with these vessels of wrath, whilst fitting for destruction !

Reflections.—Cheer thyself, O my soul, with the heart-strengthening bread of this Divine meditation. Let faith turn every drop of this truth into a soul-reviving cordial. God has sown the precious seed of grace upon my soul ; and though my heart has been an unkindly soil; which has much hindered its growth, yet it still grows on, though by slow degrees ; and from the springing of the seed, and the shooting forth of these gracious habits, I may conclude there is a harvest approaching. “ Now is my salvation nearer than when I believed.” Every day I come nearer to my salvation ; O that every day I were more active for the God of my salvation ! Grow on, my soul ; grow on from faith to faith. Keep thyself under the ripening influences of heavenly ordinances. The faster thou growest in grace, the sooner thou shalt be reaped down in mercy, and bound up in the bundle of life ; 1 Sam. xv. 29. I have not yet attained the measure and proportion of grace assigned to me, neither am I already perfect, but am reaching forth to the things before me, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of my heavenly calling ; Phil. iii. 12. O mercy to be admired, that I who lately had one foot in hell, stand now with one foot in heaven !

But the case is far different with me, says the declining Christian. Whilst others are ripening apace for heaven, I am withering. Many a soul plowed up by conviction and sown by sanctification long after me, has quite outgrown me. My sweet and early blossoms are nipped and blown off, my bright morning overcast and clouded. Had I kept on, according to the rate of my first growth, I should now have been in heaven, or at least in the suburbs of it on earth ; but my graces

wither and languish ; my heart contracts and cools to heavenly things ; the sun and rain of ordinances and providences improve not my graces : how sad therefore is the state of my soul !

Thy case, O declining saint, is sad, but not like mine, says the hardening sinner. Thine is but a temporary remission of the acts of grace, which is recoverable ; but I am judicially hardening, and “treasuring up to myself wrath against the day of wrath.” Time was when I had some tender sense of sin, when I could mourn and grieve for it ; now I have none at all : my heart is grown stupid and sotish. Time was when I had some conscientious care of duty, when my heart would smite me for the neglect of it ; but now I have none at all. Wretched soul, what wilt thou do ? Thou art gone far indeed, a few steps further will put thee beyond hope. Hitherto I stand in the field ; the long-suffering God yet spares me ; yea, spares me while he has cut down many of my companions in sin round about me. What does this admirable patience, this long-suffering, drawn out to a wonder, speak concerning me ? Does it not tell me, that the Lord is not willing I should perish, but rather come to repentance ? And what argument is like his pity and patience, to lead a soul to repentance ? O that I may not frustrate at last the end of a long-suffering God, lest he proportion the degree of his wrath, according to the length of his patience !

CHAPTER XVI.

On the Care of Husbandmen to provide for Winter.

Observation.—Good husbandmen are careful in summer to provide for winter. Then they gather in their winter store ; food and fuel for themselves, and fodder for their cattle. “He that gathereth in summer, is a wise son : but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame,” Prov. x. 5. A well chosen season is of the greatest advantage to any action : which, as it is

seldom found in haste, so it is often lost by delay. It is a good proverb which the frugal Dutch have among them; "A good saver will make a good benefactor." And it is a good proverb of our own, "He that neglects the occasion, the occasion will neglect him." Husbandmen know that summer will not hold all the year; neither will they trust to the hopes of a mild and favorable winter, but provide for the worst in season.

Application.—What excellent Christians should we be, were we but as provident and thoughtful for our souls! It is doubtless a singular point of Christian wisdom to foresee a day of spiritual straits and necessities; and, during the day of grace, to make provision for it. This great gospel truth is excellently shadowed forth in this natural observation, which I shall branch out into these particulars—

1. Husbandmen know that there is a change and vicissitude of seasons and weather. Though it be pleasant summer weather now, yet winter will tread upon the heel of summer: frosts, snows, and great falls of rain, must be expected. This alternate course of seasons in nature, is settled by a firm law of the God of nature to the end of the world, "Whilst the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night, shall not cease," Gen. viii. 22.

And Christians know that there are changes in the right-hand of the Most High, in reference to their spiritual seasons. If there be a spring-time of the gospel, there will be also an autumn; if a day of prosperity, it will set in a night of adversity; for "God hath set the one over against the other." In heaven there is a day of everlasting serenity; in hell a night of perfect endless horror and darkness; on earth, light and darkness take their turns, prosperity and adversity, even to souls as well as bodies, succeed each other.

2. Common prudence and experience enable the husbandman, in the midst of summer, to foresee a winter, and to provide for it before he feels it; yea, natural instinct teaches this to the very birds of the air, and beasts of the field.

And spiritual wisdom should teach Christians to exer-

cise their foreseeing faculties, and not suffer them to feel evil before they fear it. But, O the stupifying nature of sin ! though the stork in the heavens knows her appointed time, and the turtle, crane, and swallow, the time of their coming, yet man, whom God has made wiser than the fowls of the air, acts in this quite below them.

3. The end of God's ordaining a summer season, and sending warm and pleasant weather, is to ripen the fruits of the earth, and give the husbandman fit opportunity to gather them in.

And God's design of giving men a day of grace, is to furnish them with an opportunity for the everlasting happiness and salvation of their souls. "I gave her space to repent." It is not a mere reprieve of the soul, or only a delay of the execution of threatened wrath, though there be much mercy in that; but the peculiar aim of this patience and bounty of God is to open for them a way to escape the wrath to come, by leading them to repentance; Rom. ii. 4.

4. The husbandman does not find all harvest-seasons alike favorable. Sometimes they have much fair weather, and meet with no hindrance in their business; at other times it is a catching harvest, but now and then a fair day; and then they must be active, or all is lost.

There is also a great difference in soul-seasons. Some have had a long and fair season of grace; a hundred and twenty years did God wait upon the old world, in the ministry of Noah; long did God wait on the gainsaying Israelites; "I have a long time held my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself," Isa. xlii. 14. Others have a short season; all lies upon a day; Acts xvii. 30.

5. A proper season neglected and lost is sometimes irrecoverable. Many things in husbandry must be done in their season, or cannot be done at all for that year. If we plow not and sow not in the proper season, we lose the harvest of that year.

It is even so as to spiritual seasons. Christ neglected and grace despised, in the season when God offers them; are often irrecoverably lost. "Then," that is, when the season is over, "they shall call upon me, but I will not

hear," Prov. i. 28. O there is a great deal of time, in a short opportunity! That may be done or prevented, in an hour rightly timed, which cannot be done, or prevented, in a man's life-time afterwards. Our glass runs in heaven, and we cannot see how much or little of the sand of God's patience is yet to run down; but this is certain—when that glass is run, there is nothing to be done for our souls.

6. Those husbandmen who are careful and laborious in the summer, have the comfort and benefit of it in winter. He who then provides fuel, shall sit warm in his habitation; he who provides food for his family and fodder for his cattle, in the harvest, shall eat the fruit of it, and enjoy the comfort of his labors, when others are exposed to shifts and straits. And he who provides for eternity, and lays up for his soul a good foundation against the time to come, shall eat when others are hungry, and sing when others howl; Isa. lxv. 13. A day of death will come, and that will be a day of straits to all negligent souls; but then the diligent Christian shall enjoy the peace and comfort that shall flow in upon his heart, from his holy care and sincere diligence, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in this world." A day of judgment will come, and then foolish virgins, who neglected the season for getting oil in their lamps, will be put to their shifts; then they will come to the wise, and say, "Give us of your oil," but they have none to spare, and the season of buying is then over.

7. No wise husbandman will neglect a fit opportunity of gathering in his hay and corn, upon a presumption of much fair weather to come. He will not say, The weather is settled, and I need not trouble myself; though my corn or hay be fit for the house, yet I may get it in another time as well as now.

And no wise Christian will lose a present season for his soul, upon the hopes of much more time yet to come; but will rather say, Now is my time, and I know not what will be hereafter. Hereafter I may wish to see one

of the days of the Son of Man, and not see it. It is sad to hear how skilful some men are to dispute themselves out of heaven, as if the devil had hired them to plead against their own souls ; sometimes urging the example of those that were called at the eleventh hour, and sometimes that of the penitent thief : but O to how little purpose is the former pleaded ? They that were called at the eleventh hour were never called before, as these have been ; no man had hired, that is, called or invited them to Christ ; and as for the thief, his case is a singular and extraordinary example. It was done when Christ hung on the cross, and was to be inaugurated ; then kings manifest such bounty, and pardon such crimes as are never pardoned afterwards. Besides, God was then in working many miracles ; then he rent the rocks, opened the graves, raised the dead, and converted this thief ; but God is not working miracles now.

Reflections.—1. I have indeed been a good husbandman for the world, says the careless sinner. With what care and providence have I looked out for myself and family to provide food to nourish them, and clothes to defend them against the asperities of winter ! Meanwhile I have neglected to make provision for eternity, to take care for my soul. O my destitute soul, how much have I slighted and undervalued thee ! I have taken more care for a horse or an ox, than for thee. What shall I answer, when the Lord shall say, Thou couldest foresee a winter, and seasonably provide for it ; yea, thou hadst so much care of thy very beasts as to provide for their necessities ; and why tookest thou no care for thy soul ? Was that only not worth the caring for ?

2. Is it so dangerous to neglect a present proper season of grace ? What then, says the presumptuous soul, have I done, who have suffered many such seasons to die away, on a groundless hope of future opportunities ? Ah deluded wretch, what if that supposition fail ? Where am I then ? I am not the lord of time ; neither am I sure, that he who is its Lord, will ever vouchsafe an hour of grace in old age, to him who has neglected many such hours in youth. Neither indeed is it usual for

God so to do. It is related of Caius Marius Victorius, who lived about three hundred years after Christ, and to his old age continued a Pagan, that being at last convinced of the Christian faith, he came to Simplicianus, and told him he would be a Christian; but neither he nor the church could believe it, it being so rare for any to be converted at his age; but at last seeing it was real, there was a shouting, and gladness, and singing of psalms, in all the churches; the people crying, "Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian!" This was written for a wonder: and what ground have I to think, that God will work such wonders for me, who have neglected his ordinary means of salvation?

And what says the industrious Christian? Bless the Lord, O my soul, who gave thee a season of grace, which is more than he has afforded to thousands; yea, bless the Lord for giving thee a heart to understand and improve that season. I confess I have not improved it as I ought; yet this I can, through mercy, say, that however it may fare in future times with my outward man, though I have no treasures or stores laid up on earth, yet I have a blessed hope laid up in heaven; I have bags that wax not old. Whilst worldlings rejoice in their stores and heaps, I rejoice in these eternal treasures.

CHAPTER XVII.

On Reaping the same that we Sow.

Observation.—God gives to every seed its own body. At first he created every tree and herb of the field having its seed in itself, for the conservation of their species, and they all inviolably observe the law of their creation. All fruits naturally rise out of the seeds and roots proper to them. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles:" such productions would be monstrous in nature; and although the juice or sap of the earth be the common matter of all kind of fruits, yet it is modified ac-

cording to the different sorts of plants and seeds it nourishes. Where wheat is sown it is turned into wheat; in an apple-tree, it becomes an apple.

Application.—Transfer this to spiritual things, and the proposition shadowed forth by it, is fully expressed by the apostle in Gal. vi. 7; “What a man soweth, that shall he reap. They that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and they that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” And as surely as the harvest follows the seed-time, so surely shall such fruits and effects result from the seeds of such actions. “He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity,” Prov. xxii. 8; and “they that now go forth weeping, and bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them,” Psal. cxxvi. 6. The sum of all this is, that our present actions have the same relation to future rewards and punishments, as the seed we sow in our fields has to the harvest we reap from it. Every gracious action is the seed of joy; and every sinful action the seed of anguish and sorrow to the soul that sows it. Two things are sensibly presented to us in this similitude—

1. That as the seed sown is presently covered from our sight under the clods, and for some time after we see no more of it, and yet at last it appears again, so our present actions, though perhaps forgotten, are yet not lost, but after a time shall appear again in order to a retribution.

If this were not so, all good and holy actions would be to the loss of him that performed them. All the self-denial and sharp sufferings of the people of God, would turn to their damage in point of personal utility; and then also, what difference would there be betwixt the actions of a man and a beast, with respect to future good or evil? Yea, man would then be more feared and obeyed than God, and all souls be swayed in their motions, only by the influence of present things. And where then would religion be found in the world? It is an excellent remark of Drexellius; “Our works,” says he, “do not pass away as soon as they are done, but, as seed sown, shall, after a time, rise up to all eternity. Whatever we think, speak, or do, once spoken, thought, or done, is eternal, and abides for ever.”

O, how careful then should men be of what they speak and do, whilst they are commanded so to speak and so to do, as those that shall be judged by the perfect law of liberty! What more transient than a vain word? And yet for such words men shall give an account in the day of judgment. That is the first thing—actions, like seed, shall rise and appear again in order to a retribution.

2. The other thing held forth in this similitude is, that according to the nature of our actions now, will be the fruit and reward of them then. Though the fruit or consequence of holy actions, for the present, may seem bitter, and the fruit of sinful actions, sweet and pleasant; yet there is nothing more certain than that their future fruits will be according to their present nature and quality? In eternity the world shall see distributive justice shining out in its glory. There the Lord will give “tribulation, anguish, and wrath to every soul of man that doth evil; but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good.” There it will appear what seed we sowed, what lives we lived; for “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.”

Reflections.—This meditation may be to me, let the profane sinner say, what the hand-writing upon the wall was to Belshazzar; and a like effect it should have upon me; for if all the actions of this life be seed sown for the next, what a crop, what a dreadful harvest, am I likely to have! How many oaths and curses, lies and vain words, have I sown with my tongue! How have I wronged, oppressed, and over-reached in my dealings! How have I rushed into profaneness, drunkenness, uncleanness, and sabbath-breaking, “as the horse rusheth into the battle!” And what shall I reap from such seed as this, but vengeance and fury? These sins seemed pleasant in the commission, but, O how bitter will they be on their account! “What shall I do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?” Is it not reasonable and just, O my soul! that thou shouldest eat the fruit of thine own planting, and reap what thou hast sown? I thought nothing but profit and pleasure would spring from my lust: but now I see it is a root bearing gall and wormwood. Wretched soul, what shall

I do ? I am undone. I have been the author of mine own ruin. O let me rather taste the bitterness of sin, by repentance now, than enjoy its present pleasures which betray the soul to endless wrath !

2. How have I also been deceived in this matter, says the merely moral man ! I verily thought that glory and immortality would have been the fruit of my moral honesty and righteousness; but now I see such fruit can spring from no other root but special grace. Glory is disclosed from no other bud but holiness. Alas ! all my planting and sowing was to little purpose, because I sowed not the right kind of seed. The best fruit I can expect from this is but a less degree of damnation. Deceived soul, thy seed is no better than what the moral heathens sowed ; and do I expect better fruit than what they reaped ? Morality, without Christ, is but a free slavery ; and Satan holds me as fast in captivity by this, as he does the profane by the pleasure of their lusts. Either I must sow better seed, or expect to reap bitter fruit.

3. Meanwhile, says the Christian, bless the Lord, O my soul, who enabled thee to sow better seed ; who kept thee watching, humbling thyself, and praying, whilst others have been swearing and blaspheming. This will yield thee fruit of joy in the world to come ; yea, it yields present peace to thy conscience. Not that such fruits are meritoriously contained in these actions. I sow to myself in righteousness, but I reap in mercy. This is the way in which God will save and glorify me. O then, let me be ever abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that my labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the Joy of Harvest.

Observation.—AMONG earthly joys, the joy of harvest is no small joy. It is usual with men, when they have reaped down their harvest, to demonstrate their joy by shouting and loud acclamations.

Application.—Thus, and unspeakably more than thus, do saints rejoice and shout for joy, when they reap the favor and love of God, for which they labored in many a weary duty. This joy of harvest, great as it is and much as carnal hearts are lifted up with it, is but a trifle, a thing of nought, compared with theirs. After they have sown to themselves in righteousness, and waited for the effects and returns of their duties with patience, and at last come to reap in mercy, either the full harvest in heaven or but the first-fruits of it on earth, they rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” “This puts more gladness into their hearts, than when corn and wine increase.” I will show you the transcendency of spiritual joys above the joy of harvest, in these eight particulars following—

1. You who joy with the joy of the harvest are glad, because now you have food for yourselves and families to live upon all the year: but the Christian rejoices because he has bread to eat that the world knows not of. Christ is the food of his soul, and his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, the most real and excellent food.

2. You rejoice when your harvest is in, because corn is virtually many other things besides food. You can turn it into clothes to keep you warm, and many other necessaries may be purchased by it. But yet it is not like Christ, the object of a saint's joy. Though it answers many things, it does not answer all things, as Christ does. Turn it into what you will, it has but a limited and respective usefulness. But Jesus Christ is all in all to believers, and out of him their faith can fetch all supplies. He is their health in sickness, their strength in weakness, their ease in pain, their honor in reproach, their wealth in poverty, their friend in friendlessness, their habitation when houseless, their enlargement in bonds, the strength of their hearts, the life of their life. Whatever excellencies are scattered among all the creatures, meet all in Christ, and much more also.

3. You rejoice when you have gotten in your harvest, because now you can pay those debts which you have contracted. It is a comfort to be out of debt; and you may lawfully rejoice that God gives you wherewith to

fulfil your engagements, that you may owe no man any thing but love. But still the joy of harvest falls short of the joy of the saints; for you rejoice that you are or have wherewith to help yourselves out of men's debt; but they rejoice that they are out of God's debt; that his book is cancelled, and their sins pardoned; that by reason of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the law can demand nothing from them. O what matter of joy is this!

4. You rejoice, because now your corn is out of danger. All the time it was abroad, it was in hazard, but now it is housed you fear not the rain. But Christians rejoice, not because their corn is safe, but because their souls are so. All the while they abode in an unregenerate state, they were every moment in danger of the storms of wrath; but now being in Christ, that danger is over. And what comparison is there betwixt the safety of a little corn, and the security of an immortal soul?

5. Your joy is but a gift of common providence. Turks and Heathens can rejoice with your joy; but the joy of a Christian, is a peculiar favor and gift of God. Corn is given to all nations, even the most barbarous and wicked have store of it; but Christ is the portion of but a few, and those the dearly beloved of God.

6. Your joy will have an end. The time is coming, that when you have reaped down your harvests, yourselves must be reaped down by death, and then you will rejoice in these things no more. But when your joy is ended, then is the joy of saints perfected. They reap their harvest, when you leave your harvest. Their consolation is everlasting.

7. God can separate your joy from these enjoyments, even while you have them, as well as when you leave them. It is one thing for a man to have riches and full barns, and another thing to have comfort in them. But the joy of Christians is a thing inseparable from their enjoyment of Christ. The sense of their interest may indeed be lost, and thus the acts of their joy intermitted; but they always have it in the seed, if not in the fruit. "Joy is sown for the upright;" he has it still in the principle and in the promise.

8. The joy of harvest-men is, for the most part, in their harvest only. Take that away, and their joy ceases.

Earthly hearts are acquainted with no higher comforts. But the people of God can joy in him, and take comfort in their earthly enjoyments too. And the comfort they take in these things, is much more refined and sweet than yours; for they enjoy all these things in God; and his love in giving them, puts a sweetness into them, that you are unacquainted with.

Reflections.—And here let him that has a full barn, but no Christ, say, How have I rejoiced in a thing of nought, and pleased myself with vanity! God has blessed me in my fields and in my stores, but not with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. My barns are full of corn, but my soul is empty of grace. Common bounty has given me a fulness of the things of this life; but what if this be the whole of my portion from the Lord? What if the language of his providences to my soul should be this, Lo! here I have given thee the fatness of the earth. Thou shalt not say that thou hast not tasted of thy Creator's bounty; but make the most of it, for this is all that ever thou shalt have from me? Is not this enough to damp all my carnal mirth?

And here too is a reflection for one that has Christ, but no full barn. “Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Though he has not seen fit to give me much of this world in hand, yet it has pleased him to settle a rich inheritance upon me by promise; the hopes and expectations whereof yield my soul more true comfort, than all the present enjoyments of this world could have done. Blessed be the Lord, who has not given me my portion in this life, that by keeping me from the enjoyment, he may also preserve me from the snares, of a prosperous estate.

And here too is a reflection for one that has a full barn and Christ too. But, Lord, how am I obliged, above thousands, to love and praise thee, to bless and admire thee, who hast not only plentifully provided for my soul, but for my body too! who hast given me both the upper and the nether springs, heaven and earth, things present and things to come! Thou hast not dealt so with all; no, not with all of thy own people: many of them are strangers to the mercies which I enjoy. God has done great

things for me, O my soul; what wilt thou do for God? The better the condition is he has placed me in, the more am I bound for his service. And yet I fear, it will be found, that many a poor Christian who labors with his hands to get his bread, redeems more hours for God than I do. Lord, make me wise to understand and answer the double end of this gracious dispensation. Let me bestow more of my time upon God, and stand ready to minister to the necessities of his people.

And here also is a reflection for one that has neither a barn nor Christ. O what an unhappy wretch am I, who have nothing either in hand, or in hope! am miserable here, and likely to be so for ever! Had I but an interest in Christ, as the godly poor have, that would sweeten all present troubles, and show me the end of them; but, alas! I am poor and wicked, contemned of men and abhorred of God, an object of contempt both to heaven and earth. Lord, look upon such a truly miserable object with compassion. Give me a portion with thy people in the world to come, if thou never better my outward condition here! O sanctify this poverty. Bless these straits and wants, that they may necessitate my soul to go to Christ. Make this poverty the way to glory, and I shall bless thee to eternity that I was poor in this world.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the Threshing of Corn.

Observation.—HUSBANDMEN, having different sorts of grain, do not beat all alike on the threshing-floor; but they bestow on some grain more, on others fewer, strokes, according to the different qualities of the grain to be threshed. “The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is the cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod,” *Isaiah xxviii, 27.* The manner of beating out the corn in former times was different from that which is now in use among us. They

had the cart-wheel, which was full of iron spokes or teeth, and the hoofs of beasts, for the harder sort of grain, as wheat, rye, and barley; a staff or flail for the fitches, and a rod or twig for the cummin; all which instruments were proportioned to the nature of the grain.

Application.—God, having to do with different sorts of offenders, does not use the same severity with them all, but proportions his corrections to their abilities and strength. “I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished,” Jer. xxx. 11. Afflicted thou must be; my regard for my own glory and thy good, renders it necessary; but yet I will do it moderately. I will not lay on without measure or mercy, as I intend to do upon thy enemies. Thy God, O Israel, will not afflict thee according to the greatness of his power, and his wrath answerable thereunto; that would break thee to pieces; Psal. lxxviii. 38. Nor yet will he afflict thee according to the demerit of thy sin; Ezra ix. 13. Neither my power nor thy desert shall be the rule of my proceedings; but I will afflict thee with moderation and mercy, as thou art able to bear.

The similitude betwixt the husbandman’s threshing his corn and the Lord’s afflicting his people, stands in these particulars—

1. The husbandman’s end in threshing the corn is, to separate it from the husks and chaff; and God’s end in afflicting his people is, to separate them from their sins. “By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.” He aims not at the destruction of their persons, but of their lusts.

2. If the husbandman have cockle, darnel, or pernicious tares before him on the floor among his corn, he little regards whether it be bruised or battered to pieces by the thresher or not; it is a worthless thing, and he spares it not. Such tares are the enemies of God; and when these come under his flail, he strikes them without mercy, for these the Lord prepares a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, which shall beat them to dust, Isa. xli. 15.

3. When the husks and chaff are perfectly separated

from the grain, then the husbandman beats it no more. When God has perfectly purged and separated the sins of his people, then afflictions shall come to a perpetual end. He will never smite them again. There is no noise of the threshing instrument in heaven. He that beat them with his flail on earth, will put them into his bosom in heaven.

4. Though the husbandman beats his corn as if he were angry with it, yet he loves and highly prizes it; and though God strikes and afflicts his people, yet he sets a great value upon them. And it is equally absurd to infer God's hatred to his people from his affliction of them, as the husbandman's hatred of his corn, because he threshes and beats it. "Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, and chasteneth every son whom he receiveth."

5. Though the husbandman thresh and beat the corn, yet he will not bruise or hurt it, if he can help it; though some require more and harder strokes than others, yet none shall have more than it can endure. And though the Lord afflict his servants, yet he will do them no hurt; Jer. xxv. 6. Some need more rods than others, but none shall have more than they can bear. The Lord knows the measures and degrees of his servants' faith and patience, and according to them shall their trials be. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him; for he knows their frame, he remembers they are but dust," Psal. ciii. 13. "He makes a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. This care and tenderness over his afflicted, is eminently discovered in three particulars—in not exposing them to trials, until he has prepared them for them. "Tarry ye at Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," Luke xxiv. 49. He gives them sometimes eminent discoveries of his love immediately before, and as a preparative to, their sufferings, in the strength whereof they are carried through all.—Or if not so, he intermixes supporting comfort with their troubles; as you sometimes see the sun shine out while the rain falls. It was so with Paul; "This night there stood by me the angel of the Lord, whose I am," Acts xxvii. 23.—And he takes off the affliction when they can bear it no longer.

Reflections.—A reflection for persecutors. How un-

like am I to God, in the afflicting of his people! The Lord is pitiful when he smites them, but I have been cruel. He is kind to them, when most severe; but the best of my kindness to them, may fitly enough be called severity. God smites them in love; I have smitten them in hatred. O what have I done? If he shall have judgment without mercy, that showed no mercy, how can I expect mercy from the Lord, whose people I have persecuted mercilessly for his sake?

A reflection for such as meet with no affliction: Is the Lord's wheat thus threshed on the floor of afflictions? what then shall I think of my condition, who prosper and am let alone in the way of sin? Surely the Lord looks on me as on a weed; and not as his corn; and it is too probable, that I am rather reserved for burning, than for threshing. Some there are whom God loves not so well as to spend a rod upon them, but says, "Let them alone;" but miserable is their condition, notwithstanding their impunity! For what is the interpretation but this, I will come to a reckoning with them altogether in hell? Lord, how much better is thy afflicting mercy, than thy sparing severity! Better is the condition of an afflicted child, than of a rejected bastard. O let me rather feel thy rod now, as the rod of a loving Father, than feel thy wrath hereafter, as the wrath of an omnipotent avenger!

A reflection for an afflicted saint. Well then, despise not, O my soul. Thou hearest the husbandman loves his corn, though he threshes it; and surely the Lord loves thee not the less, because he afflicts thee so much. If affliction be the way to heaven, blessed be God for affliction! The threshing-strokes of God have come thick upon me; and by them I may see what a tough and stubborn heart I have: if one stroke would have done the work, he would not have lifted up his hand the second time; I have not had a stroke more than I have needed; and by this means he will purge my sins: blessed be God, for that! The damned have infinitely more and harder strokes than I, and yet their sin shall never be separated by their sufferings. Ah sin, cursed sin, I am so much out of love with thee, that I am willing to endure more than all this to be well rid of thee! All this I suffer for thy sake; but the time is coming when I shall be rid of sin and suffer-

ing together: meanwhile I am under my own Father's hand. Smite me he may, but hate me he cannot.

CHAPTER XX.

On the Winnowing of Corn.

Observation.—WHEN the corn is threshed out on the floor, where it lies mingled with empty ears and worthless chaff, the husbandman carries it out altogether into some open place; where, having spread his sheet for the preservation of the grain, he exposes it to the wind; the good, by reason of its solidity, remains upon the sheet, but the chaff, being light and empty, is separated from the good grain into a distinct heap.

Application.—Men have their winnowing-days, and God has his; a day to separate the chaff from the wheat, the godly from the ungodly. Such a day God has in this world. There is a double fanning or winnowing of men here; one is doctrinally, “His fan is in his hand; and he shall thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” The preaching of the gospel is as a fan in Christ’s hand; and it is as much as if John had thus told the Jews, that though there were many hypocrites among them, who had now a name and place among the people of God, and gloried in their church privileges, yet there was a purging blast of truth coming, which should make them fly out of the church, as chaff out of the floor. The other winnowing is judiciously, by bringing sore and grievous trials and sufferings upon the churches for this very end, that those who are but chaff, empty and vain professors, may by such winds be separated from his people. And yet, notwithstanding all these winnowings upon earth, much chaff will still abide among the corn; therefore God has appointed another day for the winnowing of the world, even the day of judgment; in reference to which it is said in Psalm i. 4; “The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away:

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therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." I will not strain the similitude, but display it in these particulars—

1. The chaff and wheat grow together in the same field, and upon the same root and stalk. In this wicked men are like chaff, who not only associate with the people of God, but oftentimes spring up with them in the same family, and from the same root or immediate parents. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Yet the one was wheat, the other chaff.

2. The husbandman would not suffer the husks, chaff, and dry stalks, to remain in the field, if it were not for the good corn's sake. He would quickly set fire to it, were it not that the corn is among it. And be assured, God would never suffer the wicked to abide long in this world, were it not for his own elect that are dispersed among them. Except the Lord had such a remnant dispersed in the world, he would quickly set fire to the four quarters of it, and make it like Sodom.

3. Though chaff in itself be nothing worth, yet it is of some use to the corn while it is standing in the field; the stalk bears up the ear, and the chaff covers the grain, and defends it from the injury of the weather. Thus God makes wicked men of use to his people in outward society; they help to support and protect them. "The earth helped the woman;" worldly men for carnal ends helped the church, when a flood of persecution was poured out; Rev. xii. 16. The church often helps the world; it receives many benefits from the people of God; and sometimes God over-rules the world to help his church.

4. If there be any chaff among the corn, it will appear when it is sifted in a windy day; it cannot possibly escape if it be well winnowed. Much more impossible is it for any wicked man to escape the search of God in that day. The closet hypocrite shall then be detected, for God will judge the secrets of men. "He will then bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts," 1 Cor. iv. 5.

5. After corn and chaff are separated by the winnowing wind, they shall never lie together in one heap any more. The wicked shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and

all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but they themselves thrust out. There is no chaff in heaven.

Reflections.—Am I an empty vain professor, who wants the pith and substance of real godliness? Then am I but chaff in God's account, though I grow among his corn. The eye of man cannot discern my hypocrisy; but when he comes, whose fan is in his hand, then how plainly will it be detected! Angels and men shall discern it, and say, “Lo, this is the man that made not God his hope.” How shall I abide the day of his coming? Things shall not be carried then by names and parties, as they are now; every one shall be weighed in a just balance, and a “Mene Tekel” written upon every false heart. My own conscience shall join with my Judge, and shall then acknowledge, that there is not one drop of injustice in all that sea of wrath; that though I am damned, yet I am not wronged. “Is there such a fanning-time coming? Why do not I then sift my heart every day by serious self-examination? No work more important to me than this; and yet how much have I neglected it! O my soul, thou hadst been better employed in searching thine own estate in reference to that day, than in prying sinfully into the hearts and censuring the conditions of other men. Judge thyself, and thou shalt not be condemned with the world. The work indeed is difficult, but the neglect dangerous. Were I within a few days to stand at man's bar, there to be tried for my life, how busy should I be every hour of the day in writing to any that I thought could befriend me, and studying every advantage for myself! And yet what a vast difference is there betwixt man's bar and God's! betwixt a trial for my life, and for my soul!

Fear not, O my soul; let the Christian say. Though there is a blast coming which shall drive all the chaff into hell, yet it shall blow thee no harm. “I know that when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold,” Job xxiii. 10. I confess I have too much chaff about me, but yet I am not altogether chaff; there is a solid work of grace upon my soul that will abide the trial. He that is appointed to judge the world is mine; and his righteousness will make me full weight in the balance. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for sincerity; this will abide, when common gifts and empty names will flee as the chaff before the wind.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

On the Grafting of Fruit-Trees.

Observation.—A wild tree springing up naturally in the wood or hedge, and never grafted or removed from its native soil, may bear some fruit, and that fair and beautiful to the eye; but it will be always harsh, sour, and unpleasant to the taste. If however such a stock be removed into a good soil, and grafted, it may become a good tree, and yield store of pleasant fruit.

Application.—Unregenerate men, who never were acquainted with the mystery of spiritual union with Jesus Christ, but still grow on their natural root, Adam, may, by the force and power of natural principles, bring forth some fruit, which, like the wild hedge-fruit, may indeed be fair and pleasant to the eyes of men, but God takes no pleasure at all in it; it is distasteful to him, because it springs not from the Spirit of Christ; “he cannot away with it, it is iniquity.” But I will set before you a parallel betwixt the best fruits of natural men, and those of a wild ungrafted tree.—

1. The root which bears this wild fruit is a degenerate root, and that is the cause of all this sourness and harshness in the fruit it bears. It is perhaps the seed of some better tree accidentally blown or cast into some waste and bad soil, where not being ordered aright, it is become wild. So all the fruits of unregenerate men flow from the first Adam, a corrupt root. He was indeed planted a right seed, but soon became a wild and degenerate plant. Being the root from which every man naturally springs, he corrupts all the fruit that any man bears from him.

2. Although these wild hedge-fruits be unwholesome and unpleasant to the taste, yet they are fair and beautiful to the eye. A man who looks on them and does not know what their fruit is, would judge it, by its show and color, to be excellent fruit, for it makes a fairer show often times

than the best and most wholesome fruit does. Even so the natural gifts and endowments which some unregenerate persons have, seem exceeding fair to the eye, and a fruit to be desired. What excellent qualities have they! what a winning affability, humble condescension, meekness, righteousness, ingenuous tenderness and sweetness of nature! what solid judgments, tenacious memories, rare elocution! But that which is highly esteemed of men, is abomination with God. It finds no acceptance with him, because it springs from that cursed root of nature, and is not the production of his own Spirit.

3. If such a stock were removed into a better soil and grafted, it might bring forth fruit pleasant and grateful to the husbandman; and if such persons were but regenerated in their spirit and principles, what excellent and useful persons would they be in the church of God! Then their fruits would be sweet and acceptable to him. One observes of Tertullian, Origen, and Jerom, that they came into Canaan laden with Egyptian gold—that is, they came into the church full of excellent human learning, which did Christ much service.

4. When the husbandman cuts down his woods or hedges, he cuts down these crab stocks with the rest, because he values them not any more than the thorns and brambles among which they grow; and as little will God regard or spare these natural branches, how much soever they are laden with such fruit. The threatening is universal; “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “Without holiness no man,” be his natural gifts ever so excellent, “shall see God.” Embellished nature, is nature still. That which is born of the flesh, is but flesh, however it be set off with advantage to the eye of man.

Reflections.—To what purpose then do I glory in my natural accomplishments? Though I may have a better nature than some others have, yet, if I be carnal, it is a cursed nature still. These sweet qualities and excellent gifts only hide, not kill, the corruption of nature. I am but a rotten post gilded over, and all my duties but hedge-fruit, which God makes no account of. O cutting thought, that the unlearned shall rise and take heaven, when I with all my excellent gifts shall descend into hell! Hear

men was not made for scholars as such, but for believers. I shall not appear before God as a philosopher, but as a man. I shall stand upon a level with the most illiterate in the day of judgment. If I could, with Solomon, unravel nature from the center to the bounds, what would this benefit me, as long as I am ignorant of Christ, and the mystery of regeneration? My head has been occupied with study, but where did my heart labor for me? Methinks, O my soul, thou trumpest up thyself in these natural ornaments, to appear before God, as much as Agag did, when he was to come before Samuel, and silly thought that these things would prevent favor, or, at least, pity from him; but yet think not that "the bitterness of death is past." Say not within thyself, Will God cast such a one as me into hell? Shall a man of such parts be damned? Alas! Justice will hew thee to pieces, as Samuel did that abhorred king. Many thousand branches of nature, as fair and fruitful as thine, are now perishing in hell, because not transplanted by regeneration into Christ: and if he spares not them, neither will he spare thee.

I am a poor despised shrub, save another. I have no beauty at all in me; and yet such a one has the Lord chosen to transplant into Christ. O grace, for ever to be admired! O what cause have I to be thankful to free grace, and for ever to walk humbly with my God? I now have the advantage of a better root and soil than any carnal person has; it will therefore be a shame to me, and a reproach to the root that bears me, if I should be outstripped and excelled by them; yet, Lord, how often is it so! I see some of them meek and patient, whilst I am rough and morose; generous and noble, whilst I am base and penurious. Truly such a branch as I am, is no honor to the root that bears it.

CHAPTER II.

On the Union of the Graft with the Stock.

Observation.—When the husbandman has prepared his grafts in the season of the year, he carries them to

the tree or stock he intends to ingraft, and having cut off the top of the limb in some smooth part, he cleaves it with his knife or chisel a little beside the pith, knocks in his wedge to keep it open, then, (having prepared the graft) he carefully sets it into the cleft, joining the inner side of the barks of graft and stock together, the main current of the sap being there; then he pulls out his wedge, binds both together, and clays them up, to defend the tender graft and wounded stock from the injuries of the sun and rain. These tender cyons quickly take hold of the stock, and having immediate coalition with it, drink in its sap, concoct it into their own nourishment, and bear more and better fruits than ever they would have done upon their natural root; yea, the smallest bud, being carefully inoculated and bound close to the stock, will, in a short time, become a flourishing and fruitful limb.

Application.—This bears a most sweet and lively resemblance to the soul's union with Christ by faith; and indeed there is nothing in nature that shadows forth this great gospel-mystery like it. It is a thousand pities that any who are employed about, or are but spectators of, such an action, should confine their thoughts, as too many do, to that natural object, and not raise up their hearts to these heavenly meditations, which it so fairly offers them.

1. When a twig is to be ingrafted, or a bud inoculated, it is first cut off by a keen knife from the tree on which it naturally grew. And when the Lord intends to graft a soul into Christ, the first work about it, is cutting work; *Acts viii. 37.* No cyon is ingrafted without cutting, no soul united with Christ, without a cutting sense of sin and misery, without deep conviction and compunction.

2. When the tender shoot is cut off from the tree, there are, ordinarily, many more left behind upon the same tree, as promising and vigorous as that which is taken; but it pleases the husbandman to choose this, and leave them. Even so it is in the removing or transplanting of a soul by conversion. It leaves many behind it in the state of nature, as likely and promising as itself. But it pleases God to take this soul, and leave others.

3. When the grafts are cut off, it is a critical season with them. If they lie too long before they are ingrafted,

or if they take not with the stock, they die, and are never more to be recovered. They may stand in the stock a while, but are no part of the tree. So when souls are under a work of conviction, it is a critical time with them. Many a one have I known to miscarry then, and never recover again. They have, indeed for a time, stood like dead grafts in the stock, by an external profession, but never came to any thing; and as such dead grafts either fall off from the stock, or moulder away upon it, so do these. 1 John ii. 19.

4. The husbandman, when he has cut off grafts, or tender buds, makes all the speed he can to close them with the stock; the sooner this is done, the better: they get no good by remaining as they are. And truly it concerns the servants of the Lord, who are employed in this work of ingrafting souls into Christ, to make all the haste they can to bring the convicted sinner to close with Christ. As soon as ever the trembling jailor cried, "What shall I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately direct him to Christ. They do not say, It is too soon for thee to exercise faith on Christ, thou art not yet humbled enough; but "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

5. The graft is intimately united, and closely conjoined with the stock; the conjunction is so close, that they become one tree. There is also a most close and intimate union betwixt Christ and the soul which believes in him. It is emphatically expressed by the apostle; "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The word imports the nearest, closest, and strictest union. Christ and the soul cleave together in a blessed oneness, so that as the graft is really in the stock, and the spirit or sap of the stock is really in the graft, so a believer is really, though mystically, in Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is really communicated to a believer. "I live," says Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16.

6. Grafts are bound to the stock by bands; these keep it steady, else the wind would loose it out of the stock. The believing soul also is fastened to Christ by

bands, which will secure it from all danger of being loos-ed off from him any more. There are two bands of this union—the Spirit on God's part; this is the firm bond of union, without which we could never be made one with Christ—and faith on our part; “that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith,” Eph. iii. 17. These hold strongly.

7. Though the stock be one and the same, yet all grafts do not thrive and florish alike in it; some outgrow the rest; and as for those that grow not so well as the others do, the fault is in them, and not in the stock. So it is with souls really united to Christ. All do not florish alike in him; the faith of some grows exceedingly; the things that are in others are ready to die; and such souls must charge the fault upon themselves. Christ sends up living sap sufficient to make all that are in him, not only living, but fruitful, branches.

Reflections.—1. Is it so indeed betwixt Christ and my soul, as it is betwixt the ingrafted cyon and the stock? What honor and glory then has Christ conferred upon me, a poor unworthy creature! What! to be made one with him, to be a living branch of him, to be joined thus to the Lord! O what a preferment is this! It is but a little while since I was a wild and cursed plant, growing in the wilderness amongst them that shall shortly be cut down and faggoted up for hell; for me to be taken from amongst them, and planted into Christ! O my soul, fall down before the feet of free grace, that moved so freely towards so vile a creature! The dignities and honors of the kings and nobles of the earth are nothing to mine. Do I say, a greater honor is put on me, than is put upon the kings of the earth? I might have said, it is a greater honor than is put upon the angels of heaven; for to which of them said Christ, at any time, “Thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh?” Behold what manner of love is this!

2. Am I joined to the Lord as a mystical part or branch of him? How dear art thou then, O my soul, to the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ! What! a branch of his dear Son! What can God withhold from one so ingrafted? “All is yours,” saith my God, “for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.”

3. Draw matter of instruction, as well as comfort, from this sweet observation. Seeing God has put all this honor upon thee, by this most intimate union with Christ, look to it, my soul, that thou live and walk as becomes a soul thus one with the Lord. Be thou tender over his glory. Does not that which strikes at the root, strike at the very life of the graft? And shall not that which strikes at the very glory of Christ, tenderly touch and affect thee? Yea, be thou tenderly affected with all the reproaches that fall upon him from abroad, but especially with those that redound to him from thine own unfruitfulness. O disgrace not the root that bears thee! Let it never be said, that any evil fruit is found upon a branch that lives and is fed by such a root.

CHAPTER III.

On the Gathering in of Fruits in Autumn.

Observation.—It is a pleasant sight in autumn to see the fruitful branches hanging full of clusters, which weigh the boughs to the ground. But these laden branches are soon eased of their burden. As soon as they are ripe, the husbandman ascends the tree, and shaking the limbs with all his might, causes a fruitful shower to fall like hail-stones upon the ground below. How few of all those multitudes that grow in the orchard escape this shaking! If you look upon the trees, you may possibly see here one and there another, two or three upon the utmost branches, but nothing in comparison with the vast number that are shaken down.

Application.—These small remains of fruit, which left upon the tree, do well resemble that small number of God's elect in the world, which free-grace hath reserved out of the general ruin of mankind. Four things are shadowed forth to us by this similitude—

1. In a fruitful autumn, you see the trees oppressed

and overladen with the weight of their own fruits before the shaking time comes, and then they are eased of their burden. Thus the whole creation groans under the weight of the sins of those who inhabit it. The inhabitants of the world load and burden it, as the limbs of a tree are burdened, and sometimes broken, with the weight of their own fruit.

2. You may observe in your orchards what an abundance of fruits daily fall, either by storms or of their own accord; but when the shaking time comes then the ground is covered all over with fruit. Thus it is with the world, that mystical tree, with respect to men who inhabit it. There is not a year, a day, or an hour, in which some drop not, as it were, of their own accord, by a natural death; and sometimes wars and epidemical diseases blow down thousands together into their graves; these are as high winds in a fruitful orchard: but when the shaking time, the autumn of the world, comes, then all its inhabitants shall be shaken down together, either by death, or a translation equivalent to it.

3. Those fruits which are preserved on the tree, are but a handful in comparison with those that are shaken off. And thus small is the remnant that God has reserved for glory.

I look upon the world as a great tree; consisting of four large limbs or branches. The branch or division of it on which we grow, has doubtless a greater number of God's people on it than the other three; and yet when I look with a serious and considering eye upon this fruitful European branch, and see how much rotten and withered fruit there is growing on it, I am ready to say, as Chrysostom did of his populous Antioch, "Ah, how small a remnant has Jesus Christ among these vast numbers!" Many indeed are called, but how few are chosen! Alas! they are but as the gleanings when the vintage is done. It was a sad observation long since made upon the world, that, dividing it into thirty equal parts, no less than nineteen of them are found wholly overspread with idolatry and heathenish darkness; and of the eleven remaining parts, no less than six are Mahometans; so that there remain but five which profess the Christian

religion, and the far greater part of these remaining five are enveloped in popish darkness! Now, if from these we subtract all the grossly ignorant, openly profane, merely moral, and secretly hypocritical, judge then in yourselves, how small a portion of the world falls to Christ's share. Well might he say, "Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life: and few there be that find it."

Reflections.—What then will be my lot, when that great shaking time shall come, who have followed the multitude and gone with the tide of the world? Even when I have been pressed to diligence in the matters of salvation, and told what a narrow way the way of life is, how have I put it off with this, If it be so, then wo to thousands! Ah foolish heart! thousands, and ten thousands shall be woful and miserable indeed to all eternity. Will it be any mitigation of my misery, that I shall have thousands of miserable companions with me in hell? Or will it be admitted for a good plea at the judgment-seat, Lord, I did as the generality of my neighbours in the world did: except it were here and there a precise person, I saw none who lived not as I lived. Ah foolish sinner! is it not better to go to heaven alone, than to hell with company? The worst courses have always the most imitators; and the road to destruction is thronged with passengers.

And how little better is my condition, who have often traced the wickedness of my own heart to the divine mercy! Thus has my heart pleaded against strictness and duty—God is a merciful God, and will not be so severe with the world as to condemn so many thousands as are in my condition. Deluded soul! if God had damned the whole race of Adam, he had done them no wrong; yea, there is more mercy in saving but one man, than there is of severity and rigor in damning all. How many drunkards and adulterers have lived and died with thy plea in their mouths, "God is a merciful God!" But yet his word expressly says, "Be not deceived; such shall not inherit the kingdom of God." God is indeed a God of infinite mercy; but he will never exercise his mercy to the prejudice of his truth. O what rich grace is here, exclaims the Christian,

that in a general shipwreck, mercy should cast forth a plank to save me; that when millions perish, I should escape that perdition! Was it the Father's good pleasure to bestow the kingdom upon a little flock, and to make me one of that number? What singular obligations hath mercy put upon my soul! If but one of a thousand had been lost, yet my salvation would have been an act of infinite grace; but when so few out of a thousand are saved, what shall I call that grace which cast my lot among them?

CHAPTER IV.

On the Cutting down of Dead Trees.

Observation.—AFTER many years patience in the attempt to recover a fruit-tree, if the husbandman see it quite dead, and that there can be no more expectation of any fruit from it, he brings his axe and hews it down by the root; and from the orchard it is carried to the fire. He reckons it imprudent to let so useless a tree abide in good ground, where another may be planted in its room, that will better pay for the ground it stands on.

Application.—Thus deals the Lord with useless and barren professors who do but cumber his ground. “And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire,” Matth. iii. 10. “Then said the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” Luke xiii. 7. This hewing down of the barren tree does, in a lively manner, shadow forth God’s judicial proceedings against formal and empty professors under the gospel; and the resemblance clearly holds in these particulars—

1. The tree that is to be hewn down for the fire, stands in the orchard among other flourishing trees, where it has enjoyed the benefit of a good soil, a strong fence, and much culture; but, being barren, these privileges

secure it not from the fire. It is not our standing in the visible church, among real saints with whom we have been associated and enjoyed the rich and excellent waterings of ordinances, that can secure us from the wrath of God. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father," Matth. iii. 8. If Abraham's faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advantage that Abraham's blood runs in your veins. It will be a poor plea for Judas, when he shall stand before Christ in judgment, to say, Lord, I was one of thy family; I preached for thee; I did eat and drink in thy presence.

2. The husbandman does not presently cut down the tree because it shoots not forth as soon as other trees do; but he waits as long as there is any hope, and then cuts it down. Thus does God wait on barren persons from sabbath to sabbath, and from year to year; for "the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He waits long on sinners, but he keeps an exact account of every year and day of his patience. "These three years I came seeking fruit." And in Jer. xxv. 3. "These twenty-three years."

3. When the time is come to cut it down, the dead tree cannot possibly resist the stroke of the axe; it receives the blow, and falls before it. No more can the stoutest sinner resist the fatal stroke, by which the Lord hews him down. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war," Eccl. viii. 8. When the pale horse comes, away you must go into the land of darkness. Though thou cry with Adrian, O my poor soul, whither art thou going? die thou must, though it were better for thee to do any thing else than to die. "Oh!" said Henry Beaufort, the rich and wretched bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, when he perceived whereunto he must go, "wherefore must I die? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. And will not death be hired? Will riches do nothing?" No; neither riches nor policy can then avail.

4. When the dead tree is carried out of the orchard, it shall never be among the living trees of the orchard any more; many years it grew among them, but now it shall never have a place there again. And when the barren professor is carried out of the world by death, he shall never be associated with the saints any more. He may then say, Farewell, all ye saints, among whom I lived, and with whom I so often heard and prayed. I shall never see your face more.

5. When the dead tree is carried out of the orchard, the husbandman cuts off its branches, and rives it asunder with his wedges. This also is the lot of barren professors. "The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and will cut him asunder." Now therefore "consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear, or rend, you in pieces." O direful day, when the same hand that planted, pruned, and watered thee so long and so tenderly, shall now strike mortal strokes at thee, and that without pity! "For he that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will show them no favor," Isa. xxvii. 11. The day of mercy is over; the day of wrath is come.

6. The fruitless tree is cast into the fire. This also is the end and sad issue of formality. "He is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire; and they are burned," John xv. 6. This is an undoubted truth, that there is no plant in God's vineyard, but he will have glory from it by its bearing fruit, or glory on it by burning it in the fire.

Reflections.—How often have I passed by such barren trees, with a more barren heart, as little thinking such a tree to be the emblem of myself, as Nebuchadnezzar did, when he saw in a dream the tree which represented himself, and shadowed forth to him his ensuing misery. But, O my conscience, my drowsy sleepy conscience, wert thou but tender, and faithful to me, thou wouldest make as terrible an application of such a spectacle to me as the faithful prophet did to him! And thus wouldest thou, O my soul, bemoan thy condition—Poor wretch! here I grow, for a little time, among the trees of righteousness, but I am none of them. Some green and florishing leaves of

profession indeed I have, and these deceive others, but God cannot be deceived; he sees I am fruitless and rotten at the heart. Poor soul, what will thine end be but burning? Behold, the axe lieth by thy root; and wonderful it is, that there it should lie so long, and I yet be standing. Still mercy pleads for a fruitless creature; Lord, spare it one year longer. Alas! he needs strike no great blow to ruin me; his very breath blows to destruction; Job iv. 9. A frown of his face can blast and ruin me; Psalm lxxx. 6.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

On the Husbandman's Care for his Cattle.

Observation.—MANY husbandmen are exceedingly careful about their cattle, rising early to attend to and feed them. And if at any time their beasts are ill, what care is taken to recover and heal them! You may be sure that they will want nothing that is necessary for them, yea, many will choose rather to want themselves, than suffer their horses so to do; and take a great deal of comfort in seeing them thrive and prosper under their hands.

Application.—What one said of bloody Herod, who slew so many children at Bethlehem, that it were better to be his swine than his son, may truly enough be applied to some parents and masters, who take less care for saving the souls of their children and servants, than they do for the bodies of those beasts which daily feed at their stalls and cribs. Many there are who do in reference to their souls, as Jacob did with respect to the preservation of the bodies of those around him, when he put all the herds of cattle before, and his wives and little ones behind, as he went to meet his brother Esau. It is a weighty saying of a grave author, “It is vile ingratitude to rejoice

when cattle multiply, and repine when children increase; it is heathenish distrustfulness to fear that he who provides for your beasts, will not provide for your children; and it is no less than unnatural cruelty, to be careful of the bodies of beasts, and careless of the souls of children." Let us compare our care and diligence in both respects, and see, in a few particulars, whether we do indeed value our own or our children and servants' souls, as we do the life and health of a beast.

1. Your care for your horses is expressed early, whilst they are but colts, and not come to do you any service; you are willing to incur labor and expense to have them broken and taught. This is more than many do for their children. They can see them wild and profane, but yet never were at any labor or expense to check them. It is observed of the Persians, that they put out their children to school, as soon as they can speak, and will not see them again till seven years afterwards, lest their indulgence should do them hurt.

2. You keep your constant set times, morning and evening, to feed and water your cattle, and will by no means neglect them; but how many times have you neglected morning and evening duties in your families! Yea, how many are there, whose very tables, in respect of any worship God has there, differ very little from the very cribs and mangers at which their horses feed! As soon as you are up in a morning, you are with your beasts before you have been with your God. How little do such persons differ from beasts! And happy were it, if they were no more accountable to God than their beasts are.

The end of your care, cost, and pains, about your cattle is, that they may be strong for labor and the more serviceable to you; thus you comply with the end of their beings. But how rare a thing is it to find men as careful to fit their posterity to be useful and serviceable to God in their generation, which is the end of their beings! If you can make them rich and provide good matches for them, you reckon that you have fully discharged the duty of parents. If they will learn to hold the plow, that you are willing to teach them; but, when

did you spend an hour to teach them the way of salvation?

Now to convince such careless parents of the heinousness of their sin, let these questions be solemnly considered.—

Quest. 1. Whether this is a sufficient discharge of that great duty which God has laid upon Christian parents, in reference to their families? That God has charged them with the souls of their families, is undeniable; Deut. vi. 6; Eph. vi. 4. If God had not clothed you with his authority, to command them in the way of the Lord, he would never have charged them so strictly to yield you obedience as he has done; Eph. vi. 1; Col. iii. 20. A great trust is reposed in you; look to your duty; for, without dispute, you will answer for it.

Quest. 2. Whether it is likely, if the time of youth be neglected, they will be wrought upon to any good purpose afterwards? Husbandmen, let me put a case to you. Do you not see in your very horses, that whilst they are young, you can bring them to your way; but if once they have got a bad habit and by long custom it is become natural to them, then there is no breaking them of it. You see it in your very orchards; you may bring a tender twig to grow in what form you please; but when it is grown to a sturdy limb, there is no bending it afterwards to any other form, than what it naturally took. Thus it is with children. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Quest. 3. Whether, if you neglect to instruct them in the way of the Lord, Satan and their own natural corruptions will not instruct them in the way to hell? Consider this, ye careless parents. If you will not teach your children, the devil will teach them. If you show them not how to pray, he will show them how to curse and swear, and take the name of the Lord in vain. If you grudge time and pains about their souls, the devil does not. O it is a sad consideration, that so many children should be put to school to the devil.

Quest. 4. What comfort are you likely to have from

them when they are old, if you bring them not up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord when they are young? Many parents have lived to reap in their old age the fruit of their own folly and carelessness. By the law of Lycurgus, no parent was to be relieved by his children in age, if he gave them not a good education in their youth; and it is a law at this day among the Switzers, that if any child be condemned to die for a capital offence, the parents of that child are to be his executioners: these laws were made to provoke parents to look better to their charge. Believe this as an undoubted truth, that that child which becomes, through thy default, an instrument to dishonor God, shall prove, sooner or later, a son or daughter of sorrow to thee.

Reflections.—God hath found out my sin this day, let the careless parent say. This has been my practice ever since I had a family committed to my charge. I have spent more time and pains about the bodies of my beasts, than the souls of my children. Beast that I am for so doing! Little have I considered the preciousness of my own soul, or of their immortal souls. How careful have I been to provide fodder to preserve my cattle in the winter, whilst I have left my own and their souls to perish to eternity, and have made no provision for them! Surely my children will one day curse the time that ever they were born to such a cruel father, or of such a merciless mother. Should I bring home the plague into my family, and live to see all my poor children lie dead by the walls, if I had not the heart of a tiger, such a sight would melt my heart: and yet the death of their souls is far more wretched and fearful.

A reflection for the disobedient child of a Christian parent. Unhappy wretch that I am! God cast a better lot for me. I am the offspring of religious and tender parents, who have always deeply concerned themselves about the everlasting state of my soul. Many prayers and tears have they poured out to God for me, in my hearing, as well as in secret; many holy and wholesome counsels have they from time to time given me; many precious examples have they set in their own practice before me; many a time, when I have sinned against the Lord, have

they stood over me, with a rod in their hands and tears in their eyes, using all means to reclaim me ; but like an ungracious wretch, I have slighted all their counsel, grieved their hearts, and imbibited their lives to them by my sinful courses. Ah, my soul, thou art a degenerate plant! Better will it be with the offspring of infidels than with thee, if repentance prevent not. Now I live in one family with them, but shortly I shall be separated from them, as far as hell is from heaven. They now tenderly pity my misery, but then they shall approve and applaud the righteous sentence of Christ upon me. So little benefit shall I then have from my relation to them, that they shall be produced as witnesses against me, and all their rejected counsels, reproofs, and examples, charged home upon me, as the aggravations of my wickedness. And better will it be, when it shall come to this, that I had been brought forth by a beast, than sprung from the loins of such parents.

CHAPTER II.

On the hard Labor and cruel Usage of Beasts.

Observation.—THOUGH some men are excessively careful of their beasts, yet others are cruel and merciless towards them, not regarding how they burden or weary them. How often have I seen them fainting under their loads ! Many times have I heard and pitied them groaning under unreasonable burdens, and beaten on by merciless drivers, till at last, by such cruel usage, they have been destroyed, and then cast into a ditch.

Application.—Such sights as these should make men thankful for the mercy of their creation, and bless their bountiful Creator, that they themselves were not made such creatures. Some beasts are made for food only, being no otherwise useful to men, as swine: these are only fed for slaughter; we kill and eat them. Others are only for service whilst living, but unprofitable when dead, as horses; these we make toil for us from day to day, but kill them not. Others are both for food when

dead and service whilst alive, as the ox; these we make to plow our fields, draw our carriages, and afterwards we prepare them for the slaughter. But man was made for nobler ends; created lord of the lower world, not to serve, but to be served by other creatures, a mercy sufficient to melt the hardest heart into thankfulness. Luther, while pressing men to be thankful, that they are not placed in the lowest condition of creatures, tells us that two cardinals, as they were riding in great pomp to the council of Constance, saw a man in the fields weeping. They rode to him, and asked him why he wept. With his eye intently fixed on a mean and ugly animal, he told them that his heart melted with the consideration of this mercy, that God had not made him such a deformed and loathsome creature as that was, though he were formed out of the same clay with it; and this was that which made him weep. Whereon one of the cardinals cried out, "Well the unlearned will rise and take heaven, when we with all our learning shall be thrust into hell." That which melted the heart of this poor man, should melt every heart, when we behold the misery to which the poor creatures around us are subject. And this will appear a mercy of no slight consideration, if we draw a comparison betwixt ourselves and these irrational creatures, in these three particulars—

1. Though they and we were made of the same clay, yet how much better has God dealt with us, even as to the outward man! The structure of our bodies is much more excellent. God made other creatures by a word of command, but man by counsel; it was not, "Be thou," but, "Let us make man." We might have been made stones without sense, or beasts without reason, but we were made men. The noble structure and symmetry of our bodies invite our souls not only to thankfulness, but admiration. David, speaking of the curious frame of the body, says, "I am wonderfully made," or, as the vulgate reads it, painted as with a needle, like some rich piece of needle-work curiously embroidered with nerves and veins. Was any other part of the common lump of clay thus fashioned? Galen gave Epicurus a hundred years to devise a more commodious situation, configuration, or

composition, of any one part of a human body. If all the angels in heaven had studied to this day, they could not have cast the body of man into a more curious mould.

2. How little ease or rest have they! They live not many years, and those they do live are in bondage and misery, groaning under the effects of sin. But God has provided better for us, even as to our outward condition in the world. How many refreshments and comforts has God provided for us, of which they are incapable! If we are weary with labor, we can take our rest; but fresh or weary, they must stand to it, or sink under it, from day to day.

3. What a narrow capacity has God given to beasts! what a large capacity to man! Alas! they are only capable of a little sensitive pleasure; you see them sometimes frisking in a green pasture; this is all they are capable of, and this death puts an end to: but how comprehensive are our souls in their capacities! We are made in the image of God; we can look beyond present things and are capable of the highest happiness, and that to all eternity. The soul of a beast is but a material form, which, wholly depending upon the body, must needs die with it; but our souls are a divine spark or breath; and when the body dies, it dies not with it, but subsists even in its separated state.

Reflections.—How great a sin is ingratitude to God for this common, but great mercy! There is no creature made worse by kindness, but man. There is a kind of gratitude which I may observe, even in the brute beasts: they do in their way acknowledge their benefactors; “the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib.” How ready are they to serve such as feed and cherish them! But I have been both unthankful and unserviceable to my Creator and Benefactor, who has done me good all my days. Those poor creatures that sweat and groan under the load which I lay upon them, never sinned against God, nor transgressed the laws of their creation, as I have done; and yet God has dealt better with me than with them. O that the bounty of God and his distinguishing mercy may move and melt my heart into thankfulness! O that I may consider seriously what the

higher and more excellent end of my creation is, and may more endeavour to answer and live up to it! Or else, O my soul, it will be worse with thee than the beasts. It is true, they are under bondage and misery; but it is but for a little time; death will end all their pains, and ease them of all their heavy loads; but I shall groan to all eternity, under a heavier burden than ever they felt. They have no account to give, but I have a long one. What comfort is it, that I have a larger capacity than a beast has? that God has endowed me with reason, which is denied to them? Alas! this will but augment my misery, and enable me to take in a greater measure of anguish.

2. O my soul, may the Christian say, how oughtest thou to praise thy God, when thou considerest the mercies that God has bestowed upon thee; not only in that he made thee not a stone or tree without sense, or a horse or a dog without reason; but that thou art not an infidel without light, or an unregenerate person without grace! What! to have sense, and all the delights of it, which stones have not! reason, with the more high and noble pleasures of it, which beasts have not! the light and knowledge of the great things of the gospel, which the heathens have not! and such an expectation and hope of inconceivable glory and felicity, which the unsanctified have not! O my soul, how rich, how bountiful, has thy God been to thee! These are the overflowings of his love to thee who wast moulded out of the same lump with the beasts that groan on earth, yea, with the damned that groan in hell. Well may I say that God has been a good God to me.

CHAPTER III.

On the Seeking of lost Cattle.

Observation.—WHEN cattle stray away from your fields, you use all care and diligence to recover them again; tracing their footsteps, sending your servants abroad, and enquiring yourselves of all who you think can give you

any news of them. What care and pains men will take in such cases, was exemplified in Saul; who, with his servant, passed through mount Ephraim to seek the asses that strayed from his father, and through the land of Shalisha, and through the land of Shalim, and they were not there, and through the land of the Benjamites, but found them not.

Application.—The care and pains you take to recover your lost cattle, carries a sweet and lively representation of the love of Jesus Christ, in the recovery of lost sinners. Jesus Christ came from heaven on a like errand, to seek and to save that which was lost. There are several particulars in which this glorious design of Christ, in seeking and saving lost man, and the care and pains of husbandmen in recovering their lost cattle, resemble each other, though there are many particulars also in which they differ.

1. We sometimes find that cattle will break out of those very fields where they have been bred; and where they want nothing that is needful for them. And thus lost man departed from his God, brake out of that pleasant enclosure where he was abundantly provided for, both as to soul and body. He was not content with that blessed state into which God had put him, but would be trying new paths, to the ruin both of himself and his posterity.

2. Strayers are evermore sufferers; and what did man get by departing from his God, but ruin and misery to soul and body? Will you have an abridgement of his sufferings and losses? The full account none can give you. By straying from his God, he lost the rectitude and holiness of his nature; he lost the liberty and freedom of his will to good, a precious jewel of inestimable value; he lost his God, his soul, his happiness, and his very bowels of compassion towards himself in this miserable state.

3. When your cattle stray, yea, though it be but one of the flock or herd, you leave all the rest, and go after that which is lost. So did Jesus Christ. He left heaven itself, and all the blessed angels there, to come into this world to seek lost man. O the precious esteem, and dear love that Christ had to poor man! How did his

bowels yearn towards us in our low state! How did he pity us in our misery!

4. You are glad when you have found your strayed sheep; much more is Christ when he has found a lost soul. O it is a great satisfaction to him to see the fruit of the travail of his soul! yea, "there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance." What demonstrations of joy and gladness did the father of the prodigal give, when he had found his son that was lost!

There are some particulars also in which Christ's seeking lost souls, and your seeking lost cattle, differ.

1. Your cattle sometimes find the way home themselves, and return to you of their own accord; but lost man never did, nor can do so. He was his own destroyer, but can never be his own saviour. Alas! his heart is bent to backsliding; he has no will to return. Hear how Christ complains, "Ye will not come unto me." Man's recovery begins in God, not in himself.

2. Your servants can find and bring back your lost cattle, as well as you; but Christ's servants cannot do this. Ministers may discover, but cannot recover them. They daily see, but cannot save them. Lament over them they can, but help them they cannot. Intreat them to return they can and do, but prevail with them they cannot. Melancthon, when he began to preach, expected to persuade all; but old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon.

3. When you have recovered and brought home your lost cattle, you may lose them the second time, and never recover them again; but Christ cannot lose his people. Man once recovered is for ever secured by him. "All that thou hast given me, I have kept, and not one of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" and he was never savinely found.

4. Though you prize your cattle, yet you will not venture your life for the recovery of them; you rather let them go, than regain them at such an hazard; but Jesus Christ not only ventured, but actually laid down, his life to recover and save lost man. He redeemed him at the price of his own blood. He is that good shepherd who laid

down his life for the sheep. O the surpassing love of Christ to lost souls !

Reflections.—A reflection for a lost soul. Lord, I am a lost creature, an undone soul ; and herein lies my misery, that I have not only lost my God, but have no heart to return to him : nay, I fly from Christ who is come from heaven to seek and to save me. O what a miserable state am I in ! Every step I go is a step towards hell. My soul, like the prodigal, is ready to perish in a strange country ; but I have no inclination like him, to return home. Wretched soul, what will the end of this be ? If God has lost thee, the devil has found thee ; yea, death and hell will shortly find thee, if Christ do not ; and then thy recovery, O my soul, will be impossible. Why sit I here perishing and dying ? I am not yet irrecoverably lost. O let me delay no longer, lest I be lost for ever !

A reflection for one that was lost, but is now found.—O my soul, for ever bless and admire the love of Jesus Christ, who came from heaven to seek and save such a lost soul as I was. Lord, how marvellous, how matchless, is thy love ! I was lost, and am found ; nay, I am found by him from whom I fled. Thy love, O my Saviour, was a wonderful love. Thou lovedst me much more than I loved myself. I was cruel to my own soul, but thou wast kind. Thou soughtest for me a lost sinner, and not for lost angels ; thy hand of grace caught hold of me, and has let go thousands, and ten thousands, as good as myself by nature : like another David, thou didst rescue my poor lost soul out of the mouth of the destroyer ; yea, more than this, thou didst lose thine own life to find mine. And now, O blessed Jesus, since I am thus marvellously recovered shall I ever wander again from thee ? O no ; do thou preserve me.

CHAPTER IV.

On the Feeding of fat Cattle.

Observation.—Oxen that are designed for use, are daily yoked and kept short ; whilst those that are de-

signed for the shambles, are let loose in green pastures to feed at pleasure.

Application.—Thus deals the Lord oftentimes with his own children whom he designs for glory, and with the wicked who are preparing for the day of wrath. It is true, heaven has not all the poor, nor hell all the rich ; but it is a very common dispensation of Providence to bestow most of the things of this world upon them who have no portion in heaven ; and to keep them short on earth, for whom that kingdom is provided. Let me illustrate the similitude in a few particulars.

1. The beasts of slaughter have the fattest pastures ; so have the ungodly in the world ; “their eyes stand out with fatness : they have more than heart could wish.” O what full estates, what an affluence of earthly delights, has God cast upon some wicked men ! There is much wantonness, but no want in their dwellings. Some who know not which way to turn themselves in hell, once knew not where to bestow their goods on earth.

2. Beasts often grow wanton in their full pastures. The same effect has the prosperity of the wicked : it makes them wanton ; their life is but a turning from one pleasure to another ; “They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance ; they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ ; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave,” Job. xxi, 11.

3. These fat pastures hasten the death of these cattle : the sooner they are fattened, the sooner they are slaughtered ; and the prosperity of the wicked serves to the same end. “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them ;” it shall be the means of heating and heightening their lusts, and thereby fitting them for destruction. Their prosperity is food and fuel to their corruptions. Many wicked men had not been so soon ripe for hell, had they not grown in the sunshine of prosperity.

4. Fattened beasts do not in the least understand the intention of the husbandman, in allowing them such large pastures ; and as little do wicked men understand the scope and end of God’s providences in casting prosperity and wealth upon them. Little do they think their tables are a

snare, a gin, and a trap for their souls. Like beasts, they mind only what is before them, but do not at all understand the tendency and end of these their sensual delights.

5. Though the husbandman keeps his store-cattle in short commons, yet he intends to preserve them: these shall remain with him, when the others are driven to the slaughter. Such a design of preservation is carried on in all those outward straits, wants, and hardships which the Lord exposes his people to. I confess, such dispensations, for the present, are very stumbling and puzzling things even to gracious and wise persons. To see wicked men, not only exempted from their troubles, but even oppressed with prosperity; to see a godly man in wants and straits, and a wicked man have more than his heart can wish, is a case that puzzles the wisest Christian, till he considers the designs and issues of both those providences, and then he acquiesces in the wisdom of God.

Reflections.—Doth my prosperity, let the worldlingsay, prepare me for the day of slaughter? Little cause have I then to glory in it. What are all my pleasures, but so many rattles to quiet my soul, whilst its damnation steals insensibly upon it? What are all my businesses and employments in the world, but so many diversions from the business of life? O that I had never known prosperity! If I were taken captive by cruel cannibals, and fed with the richest fare, but at the same time understood, that the design of it was to fatten me up like a beast for them to feed upon, how little stomach should I have to their dainties! O my soul, it were much better for thee to have a sanctified poverty, which is the portion of many saints, than an ensnaring prosperity to ruin thee for ever.

The wisdom of my God has allotted me but a small portion here, says the poor Christian; his providence feeds me but from hand to mouth; but I am, and well may be, contented with my present state. How much better is a morsel of bread and a draught of water here, with an expectation of glory hereafter, than a fat pasture and a ripening for the wrath to come! Since the case stands thus, blessed be God for my present lot! Though I have but a little in hand, I have much in hope. My present troubles will serve to sweeten my future joys; and the

sorrows of this life will give a lustre to the glory of the next. That which is now hard to suffer, will then be sweet to remember. My songs will then be louder than my groans are now.

CHAPTER V.

On the Husbandman's Care for Posterity.

Observation.—PROVIDENT and careful husbandmen do labor not only to supply their own necessities while living, but to lay up something for their posterity when they are gone. None but bad husbandmen and spendthrifts are of the same mind with that heathen emperor Tiberius, who would often say, “When I am dead, let heaven and earth mingle; if the world will but hold my time, let it break when I am gone.” But provident men look beyond their own time, and very much concern themselves in the good or evil of their posterity.

Application.—What careful husbandmen do, with respect to the provisions they make for their children, that all prudent Christians are bound to do, with respect to the truths committed to them, and by them to be transmitted to succeeding saints.

In the first ages of the world, even till the law was given, faithful men were instead of books and records; by oral tradition, they conveyed the truths of God to posterity: but since the sacred truth has been consigned to writing, no such tradition, except fully consentient with the written word, is to be received as authentic; but the truths therein delivered to the saints, are, by verbal declarations, open confessions, and constant sufferings, to be preserved and delivered from age to age. This was the constant care of the whole cloud of witnesses, both ancient and modern, who kept the word of God's patience, and would not accept their own lives, liberties, or estates, no, nor the whole world, in exchange for that invaluable treasure of truth. They carefully practised Solomon's counsel, “Buy the truth, but sell it not;” they would not alienate that fair inheritance for all the inheritances on earth. For the same reasons that you refuse to part

with your estates, Christians also refuse to part with the truth of God.

1. You will not waste or alienate your inheritance, because it is precious, and of great value in your eyes; but much more precious are God's truths to his people: Luther professed, he would not take the whole world for one leaf of his Bible. Though some profane persons may say with Pilate, "What is truth?" yet know, that any one truth of the gospel is worth more than all the inheritances upon earth. They are the great things of God's law; and he that sells them for the greatest things in this world, makes a soul-undoing bargain.

2. You will not waste or part with your inheritance, because you know your posterity will be much wronged by it. They that drink away an estate, drink the tears of their sad widows, and the very blood of their impoverished children. The people of God also consider, how much the generations to come are concerned in the preservation of the truths of God for them. It cuts them to the heart, to think that their children should be brought up in ignorance of God.

3. You are loth to part with your estates, because you know it is hard to recover an estate again when once you have lost it. Christians also know how difficult it will be for the people of God, in times to come, to recover the light of the gospel again, if once it be extinguished. There is no truth of God recovered out of Antichrist's hands, without great wrestlings and much blood. The church may call every point of reformed doctrine and discipline so recovered, her Naphtalies; for with great wrestlings she hath wrestled for them, "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to them."

4. Rather than part with your estates, you will suffer many wants and hardships all your lives; you will fare hard to preserve what you have for your posterity: but the people of God have put themselves upon far greater hardships than these to preserve truth? They have chosen to suffer reproaches, poverty, prisons, death, and the most cruel torments, rather than the loss of God's truth. They have boldly told their enemies, that they might

pluck their hearts out of their bodies, but that they should never pluck the truth out of their hearts.

Reflections.—A reflection for the cowardly and faint-hearted. Base unbelieving heart! How have I flinched and sunk from truth, when it has been in danger! Cowardly soul, that durst not make a stand for the truth! yea, rather, bold and daring soul, that would rather venture to look a wrathful God, than an angry man, in the face! I would not own and preserve the truth, and the God of truth will not own me; “If we deny him, he will deny us.”

A reflection for such as suffer for truth. Lord, unto me hast thou committed the precious treasure of truth; and as I received it, so do I desire to deliver it to the generations to come, that “the people which are yet unborn may praise the Lord.” God forbid that I should ever part with so fair an inheritance, and thereby beggar my own, and thousands of souls! “Thou hast given me thy truth, and the world hates me.” I well know what is the ground of the quarrel. Would I but throw truth over the walls, how soon would a retreat be sounded by all persecutors! But, Lord, thy truth is invaluable precious. What a vile thing is my blood, compared with the least of all thy truths? Thou hast charged me not to sell it; and, in thy strength, I resolve never to part with it. My friends may go, my liberty may go, my blood may go; but as for thee, precious truth, thou shalt never go.

A reflection for such as are in quiet possession of truth. How dear has this inheritance of truth cost some Christians! How little has it cost us! We are entered into their labors; we reap in peace what they sowed in tears, yea, in blood. O the grievous sufferings that they chose to endure! Rather than to deprive us of such an inheritance, those noble souls, warmed with the love of Christ, made many bold and brave adventures for it; and yet at what a low rate do we value what cost them so dear! Like young heirs who never knew the getting of an estate, we spend it freely. Lord, help us thankfully and diligently to improve thy truths, while we are in quiet possession of them.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Husbandman's Care to prove and preserve his Deeds.

Observation.—We generally find that men are not more careful in trying gold or in keeping it, than they are in examining their deeds and preserving them; these are virtually their whole estate, and therefore it concerns them to be careful of them. If they suspect a flaw in their lease or deed, they repair to the ablest counsellor, submit it to his judgment, make the worst of their cause, and inquire about all the probable danger with him. If he tells them that their case is suspicious and hazardous, how much are they perplexed and troubled!

Application.—These cares and fears with which you are perplexed in such cases, may give you a little glimpse of those troubles of soul, with which the people of God are perplexed about their eternal condition; I say, “a little glimpse;” and indeed it is no more than a glimpse; for, as the loss of an earthly, though fair inheritance, is but a trifle to the loss of God and the soul, so you cannot but imagine, that the cares, fears, and solicitudes of souls about these things, are much, very much, beyond yours. Let us compare the cases, and see how they answer to each other.

1. You have evidences for your estate, and by them you hold what you have in the world. They also have evidences for their estate in Christ, and glory to come; they hold all by virtue of their union with Jesus Christ. You have their tenure in that one scripture, “All is yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” Faith unites them to him, and after they believe, they are sealed by the Spirit of promise. They can lay claim to no promise upon any other ground; this is their title to all that they own as theirs.

2. It often falls out, that after the sealing and executing of your deeds or leases, an adversary finds some dubious clause in them, and thereupon commences a suit at law with you. Thus it frequently falls out with

the people of God, who after they have believed have doubts and scruples raised in them about their title. Nothing is more common, than for the devil and their own unbelief to raise objections against their interest in Christ and the covenant of promise. These are potent adversaries, and maintain long debates with the gracious soul, and reason so cunningly and sophistically with it; that it can by no means extricate and satisfy itself.

3. All the while that a suit is depending about your title, you have but little comfort from your estate, for fear you should lose it at last. And thus stands the case with doubting Christians; they have little comfort from the most comfortable promises, little benefit from the sweetest duties and ordinances. They say, If we were sure that all this were ours, we would then rejoice in it; but, alas! our title is dubious. Christ is a precious Christ; the promises are comfortable things; but what, if they be none of ours? O how little does the doubting Christian make of his large and rich inheritance?

4. You dare not trust your own judgments in such cases, but state your case to such as are learned in the laws. So poor doubting Christians carry their cases from Christian to Christian, and from minister to minister; and if they all agree that the case is good, yet they cannot be satisfied till God says so too, and confirms the word of his servants; and therefore they carry the case often before him in such words as these, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me."

5. You will not make the best of your condition, when you state your case to a faithful counsellor; neither will they, but oftentimes they make it much worse than it is: charge themselves with that which God never charged them with, though this be neither their wisdom, nor their duty.

6. When your title is cleared, your hearts are eased; yea, not only eased, but overjoyed; though not in that degree, nor with the same kind of joy, with which the hearts of Christians are overflowed, when the Lord speaks peace to their souls. O welcome the sweet morning light after a tedious night of darkness! Now they can

eat their bread with comfort, and drink their wine, yea, or their water, with a merry heart.

Reflections.—The careless soul's reflection. O how has my spirit been tossed and hurried, when I have met with troubles about my estate! But as for spiritual troubles, and those soul-perplexing cases that Christians speak of, I understand but little of them. I never called my everlasting state in question, nor lost an hour's sleep on any such account. Ah, my supine and careless soul, little hast thou regarded how matters stand in reference to eternity!

The doubting soul's reflection. I have heard how some have been perplexed by litigious adversaries; but I believe none have been so tost with fears and distracted with doubts, as I have been about the state of my soul. Lord, what shall I do? I have often carried my doubts and scruples to thine ordinances, waiting for satisfaction to be spoken there. I have carried them to those I have judged skilful and faithful, begging their help, but nothing will succeed. Still my fears are daily renewed. O my God, do thou decide my case. Tell me how the state stands betwixt thee and me. My days consume in trouble; I can neither do nor enjoy any good, whilst things are thus with me; all my earthly enjoyments are dry and uncomfortable things; yea, which is much worse, all my duties and thine ordinances prove so too, by reason of the troubles of my heart. I am no ornament to my profession; nay, I am a discouragement and stumbling-block to others, "I will hearken and hear what God the Lord will speak." O that it might be peace! If thou do not speak it, none can; and when thou dost, keep thy servant from returning again to folly, lest I make fresh work for an accusing conscience, and give new matter to the adversary of my soul.

The assured Christian's reflection. But thou, my soul, enjoyest a double mercy from thy bountiful God, who has not only given thee a sound title, but also the clear evidence and knowledge thereof. Lord, thou hast set my soul upon her high-places; but let me not exalt myself, because thou hast exalted me.

OCCASIONAL MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATIONS ON BIRDS.

MEDITATION 1.

On the Singing of a Nightingale.

Who that hears such various and exquisite melody, would imagine the bird that makes it, to be of so small a body and mean a feather? Her charming voice not only engaged mine attentive ear, but led my feet also to make a nearer approach to the shady bush in which the excellent musician sat veiled, and the nearer I came, the sweeter the melody still seemed to be; but when I had descried the bird herself, I found her to be but little bigger, and no better feathered, than a sparrow.

This bird seems to me the lively emblem of the formal hypocrite, in that she is more in sound than substance, a loud and excellent voice, but a little despicable body. It recalled to my thoughts the story of Plutarch, who, hearing a nightingale, desired to have one killed, not questioning but that she would please the palate as well as the ear; but when the nightingale was brought him, and he saw what a poor little creature it was, "Truly," said he, "thou art a mere voice, and nothing else." So is the hypocrite: Does a man hear him sometimes in public duties, he says, What an excellent man is this! What a choice and rare spirit is he of! but follow him home, observe him in his private conversation and retirements, and then you will judge Plutarch's remark to be as applicable to him as the nightingale.

This bird is observed to charm most sweetly, when she perceives she has engaged attention. So does the hypocrite, who feeds on the applause of his admirers, and praise from men. He is little pleased with a silent melody and private pleasure betwixt God and his own soul. He is more for the theatre than the closet; and of such Christ says, "Verily they have their reward."

MEDITATION II.

On the Sight of many small Birds chirping about a dead Hawk.

Hearing a whole choir of birds chirping together, it engaged my curiosity to enquire a little into the occasion; and I perceived a dead hawk in the bush about which they made such a noise, seeming to triumph in the death of their enemy. This bird, which living was so formidable, being dead, the poorest wren or titmouse fears not to chirp or hop over. This brings to my thoughts the base and ignoble end of the greatest tyrants, of whom whilst living men were more afraid, than birds are of a hawk, but who when dead became objects of contempt and scorn. "When the wicked perish, there is shouting."

For my own part, I hope that I may so order my conversation in the world, that I may live, when I am dead, in the affections of the best, and leave an honorable testimony in the consciences of the worst; that I may oppress none, do good to all, and say when I die, as good Ambrose did, "I am neither ashamed to live, nor afraid to die."

MEDITATION III.

On the Sight of a Blackbird taking Sanctuary in a Bush from a pursuing Hawk.

When I saw how hardly the poor bird was put to it to save herself from her enemy, who hovered just over the bush in which she was fluttering, I could not but hasten to relieve her, pity and succour being a due debt to the distressed; which when I had done, the bird would not depart from the bush, though her enemy were gone. This act of kindness was abundantly repaid by the meditation with which I returned to my walk. My soul, like this bird, was once distressed, pursued, yea, seized by Satan, who had certainly made a prey of it, had not Jesus Christ been a sanctuary to it in that hour of danger. How readily did I find him to receive my poor soul into his pro-

tection! Then did he make good that sweet promise to my experience, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." It called to my mind that pretty story of the philosopher. While walking in the fields, a bird, pursued by a hawk, flew into his bosom; he took her out, and said, "Poor bird, I will neither wrong thee, nor expose thee to thine enemy, since thou camest to me for refuge." So tender, and more than so tender, is the Lord Jesus to distressed souls. Blessed Jesus, how should I love and praise thee, glorify and admire thee, for that great salvation thou hast wrought for me! If this bird had fallen into the claws of her enemy, she had been torn to pieces indeed and devoured, but then a few minutes had dispatched her, and ended all her pain and misery: but had my soul fallen into the hands of Satan, there had been no end of its misery.

Would not this scared bird be driven out of the bush that secured her, though I had chased away her enemy? And wilt thou, O my soul ever be enticed from Christ, thy refuge? O let this for ever engage thee to keep close to Christ, and make thee say, with Ezra, "And now, O Lord, since thou hast given me such a deliverance as this, should I again break thy commandments?"

MEDITATION IV.

On the Sight of divers Goldfinches intermingling with a Flock of Sparrows.

Methinks these birds resemble the gaudy courtiers and the plain peasants. How spruce and richly adorned with shining and various colored feathers, like scarlet richly laid with gold and silver lace, are those! how plainly clad in a home-spun country russet, are these! Fine feathers, says the proverb, make proud birds; and yet the feathers of the sparrow are as useful and beneficial both for warmth and flight, though not so gay and ornamental, as the others; and if both were stript out of their feathers, the sparrow would prove the better bird of the two. By this I see, that the greatest worth doth not always lie under the finest clothes. Little would a man think what rich

treasures of grace, wisdom, humility, sometimes lie under russet coats. Whilst, on the other side, "the heart of the wicked is little worth," how much soever his clothes be worth. Alas ! it falls out too frequently among us, as it does with men in the Indies, who walk over rich veins of gold and ore, lying hid under a rugged and barren surface, and know it not. For my own part, I desire not to value any man by what is extrinsical and worldly, but by that true internal excellency of grace, which makes the face to shine in the eyes of God and good men. I would contemn a vile person, though ever so glorious in the eye of the world ; but honor such as fear the Lord, how sor-did and despicable soever their appearance.

MEDITATION V.

On the Sight of a Robin picking up a Worm from a Mole-Hill.

Observing a mole working industriously beneath, and a bird watching intently above, I made a stand to observe the issue : when in a little time the bird descends, and seizes on a worm, which I perceived was crawling from the enemy below that hunted her, but fell to the share of another which from above waited for her. Methought this worm seemed to be the emblem of my poor soul, which is more endangered by its own lusts, than this worm was by the mole and bird : my pride, like the as-piring bird; watches for it above; my covetousness, like the subterranean mole, digging for it beneath. Poor soul, what a sad dilemma art thou brought to ! If thou go down into the caverns of this earth, there thou art a prey to thy covetousness that hunts thee; and if thou aspire, or but creep upward, there thy pride waits to ensnare thee. Distressed soul, whither wilt thou go ? Ascend thou mayest, not by vain elation, but by heavenly conver-sation ; "the way of life is above to the wise."

Again ; I could not but observe the accidental benefit this poor harmless bird obtained by the labor of the mole, who hunting intentionally for herself, unbarrowed and ferreted-out this worm for the bird, who possibly was hungry enough, and could not have been relieved but by the mole, the fruit of whose labor she now feeds upon.

Even thus the Lord oftentimes makes good his word to his people; "The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just." This was fully exemplified in David, to whom Nabal spoke, "Shall I take my bread, and give it to one I know not whom?" And yet David reaps the fruits of all the pains and toils of Nabal at last. Let it never encourage me to idleness, that God sometimes gives his people the fruit of others' labor, but if Providence reduce me to necessity, and disable me from helping myself, I doubt not then, but it will provide instruments to do it.

MEDITATION VI.

On the Shooting of two Finches fighting in the Air.

How soon has death ended the quarrel betwixt these two little combatants! Had they agreed better, they might have lived longer. It was their own contention that gave both the opportunity and the provocation of their death; and though living they could not, yet, being dead, they can now, lie quietly together in my hand.

Foolish birds, was it not enough that birds of prey watched to devour them, but they must peck one another? Thus have I seen the saints, the birds of paradise, tearing and wounding each other, like so many birds of prey, and by their unchristian contests occasioning their common ruin; yea, and that not only when at liberty, as these were, but when engaged also; and yet, if ever Christians will agree, it will be either in a prison or in heaven; for in prison their quarrelsome lusts lie low, and in heaven they shall be utterly done away. But O what pity is it, that those who shall agree so perfectly in heaven, should bite and devour each other upon earth!

MEDITATION VII.

On the Comparing of two Birds' Nests.

It is pretty to observe the structure and commodiousness of the habitations of these little architects; they act not by reason and counsel, but only by natural instinct, yet reason itself could hardly have contrived a neater building of such simple materials. How neatly has the

thrush ceiled or plastered his nest, with admirable art and industry ! how warmly has the finch matted his ! And both are well fenced against the injury of the weather.

This trifling object suggests to my thoughts a more excellent and serious contemplation, even the wonderful and unparalleled abasement of Jesus Christ, who for my sake voluntarily submitted himself to a more destitute and neglected state, than these birds of the air. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." O melting consideration, that the glorious Son of God, "the Lord of glory," "the brightness of his Father's glory," who "was rich," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," who from all eternity was infinitely and ineffably "delighting and rejoicing in the bosom of his Father;" that he should manifest himself in the flesh, yea, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that is, in flesh that had the marks and effects of sin upon it, as hunger, thirst, pain, weariness, and mortality ; and not only so, but choose such a state of outward meanness and poverty, never being possessed of a house in this world, but living as a stranger in other men's houses, and stooping in this respect to a lower condition than the very birds of the air, and all this for enemies ! O let it work both admiration and thankfulness in my soul !—my body is better accommodated than the body of my Lord. "O Jesus, by how much the viler thou madest thyself for me, by so much the dearer shalt thou be to me."

MEDITATION VIII.

On the early Singing of Birds.

How am I reproved for sluggishness by these watchful birds, which cheerfully entertain the very dawning of the morning with their cheerful and delightful warblings ! They set their little spirits to work betimes, whilst my nobler spirits are bound with the bonds of soft and downy slumbers. For shame, my soul. Suffer not that publican sleep to seize so much of thy time, yea, thy best and freshest time. Reprove and chide thy sluggish body.

It is pity that Christians of all men should suffer sleep to take so much out of so small a portion as their time on earth

is. But alas ! it is not so much early rising, as a wise improving those fresh and free hours with God, that will enrich the soul. O my soul, learn to prepossess thyself every morning with the thoughts of God, and suffer not those fresh and sweet operations of thy mind to be prostituted to earthly things ; for that is experimentally true, which one in this case has pertinently observed, that if the world get the start of religion in the morning, it will be hard for religion to overtake it all the day after.

MEDITATION IX.

On the Haltering of Birds with a Hair.

Observing, in a snowy season, how the poor hungry birds were haltered by a grain of hair cunningly cast over their heads, whilst, poor creatures, they were busily feeding, and suspecting no danger ; and noticing that even whilst their companions were drawn away from them, one after another, all the interruption it gave the rest was only for a minute or two, whilst they stood peeping into that hole through which their companions were drawn, and then fell to their meat again as busily as before ; I could not but say, Even thus surprisingly does death steal upon the children of men, whilst they are wholly intent upon the cares and pleasures of this life, not at all suspecting its so near approach.' These birds saw not the hand that ensnared them, nor do they see the hand of death plucking them one after another into the grave.

And even as the surviving birds for a little time seemed to stand affrighted, peeping after their companions, and then went as busily as ever to their meat again ; just so it fares with the careless, inconsiderate world, who see others daily dropping into eternity round about them, and for the present are a little startled, and will look into the grave after their neighbours, and then fall as busily to their earthly employments and pleasures again as ever, till their own turn comes.

I know, my God, that I must die as well as others ; but O let me not die as others do ; let me see death before I feel it, and conquer it before it kill me ; let it not come as an enemy upon my back, but rather let me meet it as a friend, half way. Die I must, but let me lay up a good

treasure before I go, carry with me a good conscience when I go, and leave behind me a good example when I am gone; and then let death come, and welcome.

MEDITATIONS ON BEASTS.

MEDITATION I.

On the Clogging of a straying Beast.

HAD this bullock remained quietly within his own bounds, his owner had never put such a heavy clog upon his neck; but I see the prudent husbandman chooses rather to keep him with this clog, than lose him for want of one. What this clog is to him, that is affliction and trouble to me. Had my soul kept close with God in liberty and prosperity, he would never have thus clogged me with adversity; yea, and happy were it for me, if I might stray from God no more; if, with David I might say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." O my soul, it is better for thee to have thy pride clogged with poverty, thy ambition with reproach, thy carnal expectancies with constant disappointments, than to be at liberty to run from God and duty. It is true, I am sometimes as weary of these troubles, as this poor beast is of the clog he draws after him, and often wish myself rid of them; but yet, if God should take them off, for aught I know, I might have cause to wish them on again, to prevent a greater mischief. It is said of Basil, that for many years he was sorely afflicted with an invertebrate head-ache; he often prayed for the removal of it; at last God removed it, but instead thereof he was sorely exercised with the motions and temptations of lust, which when he perceived, he as earnestly desired his head-ache again, to prevent a greater evil. Lord, if my corruptions may be prevented by my afflictions, I refuse not to be clogged with them; but my soul rather desires thou wouldest hasten the time when I shall be for ever freed from them both.

MEDITATION II.

On the Love of a Dog to his Master.

How many a weary step, through mire and dirt, has this poor dog followed my horse's heels to-day, and all this for a very poor reward! All he gets by it at night, is but bones and blows; yet will he not leave my company, but is content, on such hard terms, to travel with me from day to day.

O my soul, what conviction and shame may this leave upon thee, who art oftentimes weary of following thy master, Christ, whose rewards and encouragements of obedience are so incomparably sweet and sure! I cannot beat back this dog from following me, but every inconsiderable trouble is enough to discourage me in the way of my duty. Ready I am to resolve as that scribe did, Master, "I will follow thee withersoever thou goest;" but how does my heart falter, when I encounter with the difficulties of the way! O let me make a whole heart-choice of Christ for my portion and happiness, and then I shall never leave him, nor turn back from following him, though the present difficulties were much more, and the present encouragements much less.

MEDITATION III.

On the Fighting of two Rams.

Taking notice how furiously these sheep, which by nature are mild and gentle, did yet, like bulls, push each other, taking their advantage by going back to meet with a greater rage and fury; methought I saw in this a plain emblem of the unchristian contests and animosities which fall out amongst them that call themselves the people of God, who also are in scripture styled sheep, for their meekness and innocency; and yet, through the remaining corruptions that are in them, do thus push each other.

The fighting of these sheep comports with the sinful practices of contending Christians, in this respect, that in this fight they engage with their heads one against another: and what are they but those head-notions, or "oppositions of science" falsely so called, that have made so many broils and uproars in the Christian world? O! what clashings have these heady opinions caused in the churches!

First heads, and then hearts have clashed. Christians have dipt their tongues and pens in vinegar and gall, shamefully aspersing and reproaching one another, because their understandings were not cast into one mould.

MEDITATION IV.

On the Catching of a Horse in a fat Pasture.

When this horse was kept where he had much scope, but little grass, how gentle and tractable was he then! He would not only stand quiet to be taken, but come to hand of his own accord, and follow me up and down the field for a crust of bread, or handful of oats; but since I turned him into this fat pasture, he comes no more to me, nor will suffer me to come near him, but throws up his heels wantonly against me, and flies from me as if I were rather his enemy than a benefactor. In this I behold the conduct of my own heart towards God, who the more he has done for me, the seldomer does he hear from me. In a low and afflicted state, how tractable is my heart to duty! then it comes to the foot of God voluntarily. But in an exalted condition, how wildly does my heart run from God and duty! Of this ungrateful requital God accused his own people. Teachable and tractable in the wilderness, but when fattened in that rich pasture of Canaan, then said they, "We are lords, we will come no more to thee." But that is a bad tenant, that will maintain a suit at law against his landlord with his own rent; and a bad heart, that will fight against God with his own mercies.

MEDITATION V.

On the Hunting of a Deer.

The full-mouthed cry of these dogs, which from the morning have hunted this poor tired deer, now no longer able to stand before them, but compassed round by them who thirst for and will presently suck her blood, brings to my thoughts the condition and state of Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, who was thus hunted from place to place by blood-thirsty enemies. On this very account, the 22d Psalm, which treats of his death, is inscribed with the

title of "Ajieleth Shahar," which signifies "the hind of the morning." As the hind or deer which is intended to be run down, is roused by the dogs early in the morning, so was Christ in the very morning of his infancy, by bloody Herod. Thus was he chased from place to place, till that was fulfilled which was prophetically written of him in the same Psalm; "Dogs have compassed me about; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet."

And canst thou expect, O my soul, to fare better than he did, or escape the rage of bloody men? Surely, if the Spirit of Christ dwell in thee, these men will discover it, and chase thee. They would hunt to destruction every one, in whom there is any thing of Christ, if the gracious providence of the Lord did not sometimes take them off. Lord, should I with the hypocrite decline the profession and practice of holiness, to escape the rage of persecuting enemies, when they cease, my own conscience would begin to hunt me like a blood hound. Let me choose to be chased by men rather than by God; to flee before pursuing enemies, than be harassed from day to day with a guilty conscience.

MEDITATIONS UPON TREES.

MEDITATION I.

On the Fall of Blossoms, nipt by a frosty Morning.

Beholding, in an early spring, fruit-trees embossed with beautiful blossoms of various colors, which breathed forth their delicious odors into the air, and adorned the branches on which they grew, like so many rich jewels or glittering pendants, and further observing how these perfumed blossoms dropt off, being bitten with the frost, and how they discolored all the ground, as if a shower of snow had fallen; I said within myself, These sweet and early blossoms are not unlike my sweet and early affections to the Lord in the days of my first acquaintance with him. O what fervent love, panting desires, and heavenly delights, beautified my soul in those days! The odiferous scent of the sweetest blossoms, the morning breath

of the most fragrant flowers, has not half the sweetness with which those my first affections were enriched. O happy time, thrice pleasant spring! My soul has it still in remembrance, and is humbled within me; for these blossoms also are now nipt and faded. My heart is like the winter's earth. "Awake, O north wind; and come, south wind; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out; then let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit."

MEDITATION II.

On the Setting of Fruit.

I have often observed, that when the blossoms of a tree set, though the beauty thereof be gone, and nothing but the bare rudiment of the expected fruit be left, yet then the fruit is much better secured from the danger of frosts and winds, than whilst it remained in the flower or blossom; for now it has past one of those critical periods, in which so many trees miscarry and lose their fruit. And methought this natural observation fairly led me to this theological proposition, that good motions and holy purposes in the soul, are never secured and past their most dangerous crisis, till they are turned into fixed resolutions and corresponding actions, which is as the knitting and setting of them.

On this proposition my thoughts thus dilated—Happy had it been for thee, my soul, had all the blessed motions of the Spirit been thus knit and fixed in thee. O how have mine affections budded under the warm beams of the gospel! But a chill blast from the cares, troubles, and delights of the world without, and the vanity and deadness of the heart within, have blasted all. "My goodness hath been but a morning-dew or early cloud that vanisheth away." And even of divine ordinances, I may say what is said of human ordinances, "they have perished in the using."

MEDITATION III.

On the sight of a fair spreading Oak.

What a lofty florishing tree is here? It seems rather to be a little wood, than a single tree; and yet great as it is, it was once but a little slip, which one might pull up

with one's fingers ; this vast body was contained in a small acorn. Well then, I will never despise the day of small things, nor despair of arriving to an eminency of grace, though at present I be but as a bruised reed, and the things that are in me be ready to die. As things in nature, so the things of the Spirit, grow up to their fulness and perfection by slow and insensible degrees. The heroic acts of the most renowned believers were such as they themselves could not once perform, or, it may be, think they ever should. Great things, both in nature and grace, come from small and contemptible beginnings.

MEDITATION IV.

On the Sight of many Sticks lodged in the Branches of a choice Fruit-Tree.

How is this tree battered with stones and loaded with sticks, whilst those that grow about it, being barren or bearing harsher fruit, escape untouched ! Surely if its fruit had not been so good, its usage had not been so bad. And yet it is affirmed, that some trees, as the walnut, bear the better for being thus bruised and battered.

Even thus it fares with the best of men. The more holy, the more are they envied and persecuted ; every one that passes by will have a fling at them. But God turns all the stones of reproach into precious stones to his people. They bear the better for being thus battered. Let me be but fruitful to God in holiness, and ever abounding in the work of the Lord, and then whilst devils and men are flinging at me, either by hand or tongue persecutions, I will sing amidst them all.

MEDITATION V.

On the Gathering of choice Fruit from an unpromising Tree.

Would any man think to find such rare delicious fruit on so unworthy a tree as this appears ? I should rather have expected the most delicious fruit from the most handsome and florishing trees ; but I see that I must judge the worth neither of trees nor of men by their external form and appearance. This is not the first time I have been deceived in judging by that rule. Under fair and promising outsides I have found nothing of worth :

and in many deformed despicable bodies I have found precious and richly furnished souls. If God have given me a sound soul in a sound body, I have a double mercy to bless him for; but whether my body be vigorous and beautiful, or not, yet let my soul be so; for as the value of this tree, so the value and true honor of every man, rises rather from his fruitfulness and usefulness, than from his shape and form.

MEDITATIONS UPON A GARDEN.

MEDITATION I.

On the New-Modelling of a Garden.

A Gentlewoman, who lately saw a neat and curious garden, returns to her own with a greater dislike of it than ever; she resolves to new-model the whole plat, and reduce it to a better form. She is now become so curious and neat, that not a weed or stone is suffered in it, but all must lie in exquisite order; and whatever ornament she observed in her neighbour's, she is now restless till she sees it in her own.

Happy were it, thought I, if in a holy emulation every one would thus endeavour to rectify the disorders of his own conduct, by the excellent graces he beholds in the more heavenly and regular lives of others. Some Christians there are (I wish their number were greater) whose actions lie in so comely and beautiful an order, that few of their neighbours can look upon their examples without self-conviction and shame; but few are so happy to be provoked to self-reformation by such rare patterns. I see it is much easier to pull up many weeds out of a garden, than one corruption out of the heart; and to procure an hundred flowers to adorn a knot, than one grace to beautify the soul. It is more natural to corrupt man to envy, than to imitate, the spiritual excellencies of others.

MEDITATION II.

On the Pulling up of a Leek.

A white head and a green tail! How well does this resemble an old sinner, whose youthful lusts are not ex-

tinguished, though his white head declares that nature is almost so! Gray hairs should be always accompanied with a grave deportment; and the sins of youth should rather be the griefs than pleasures of old age. It is sad when the sins of the soul, like the diseases of the body, grow stronger, as nature grows weaker. It is sad that those who have one foot in the grave, should live as if the other were in hell; that their lusts should be so lively, when their bodies are nearly dead! Such sinful practices bring upon them more contempt and shame, than their hoary heads and reverend faces can procure them honor. Alas! how little respect or reverence can the hoary head obtain amongst wise men, except it be found in the way of righteousness! I think the lowest esteem is almost too much for an old servant of the devil; and the highest honor little enough for an ancient and faithful servant of Christ.

MEDITATION III.

On a heedless step in a curious Garden.

Passing through the small divisions of a curious knot, which was richly adorned with beautiful flowers, I was very careful to shun these flowers, which indeed had no other worth to commend them, than their exquisite color; and inadvertently trod upon and spoiled an excellent herb, which, though it grew obscurely, had rare physical virtues in it.

When I was made sensible of the involuntary trespass I had committed, I thought I could scarcely make the owner a better compensation, than by telling him, that herein, though against my will, I did but tread in the footsteps of the greatest part of the world, who are very careful to keep their due distance from splendid, though worthless men, meanwhile trampling upon and crushing under foot the obscure, but most precious servants of God in the world. For my own part, I desire to tread upon no man with the foot of contempt and pride, much less upon any good man; and that I may not, it concerns me to look before I step; I mean, to consider before I censure. Had I done so by this rare herb, I should never have hurt it.

MEDITATION IV.

On a withered Posy.

Finding in my walk, a posy of once sweet and fragrant, but now dry and withered flowers, which I supposed to be thrown away by one who had formerly worn it. Thus, said I, does the unfaithful world use its friends, when providence has blasted and withered them. Whilst they are rich and honorable, they will put them into their bosoms, as the owner of this posy did whilst it was fresh and fragrant, and as easily throw them away as useless and worthless things, when thus they come to be withered. And is this indeed the friendship of the world? Does it thus use them whom once it honored? Then, Lord, let me never seek its friendship. O let me esteem the smiles and honors of men less, and thy love and favor more! Thy love is indeed unchangeable, being pure, free, and built upon nothing that is mutable. Thou never servest thy friends as the world does its favorites.

MEDITATION V.

On the sudden Withering of a Rose.

Being with my friend in a garden, we gathered each of us a rose. He handled his tenderly, smelled to it but seldom and sparingly. I always kept mine to my nose, or squeezed it in my hand, whereby in a very short time it lost both its color and sweetness, but his still remained as sweet and fragrant as if it had been growing upon its own root. These roses, said I, are the true emblems of the best and sweetest creature-enjoyments in the world, which being moderately and cautiously used and enjoyed, may for a long time yield sweetness to the possessor of them; but if once the affections seize too greedily upon them and squeeze them too hard, they quickly wither in our hands, and we lose the comfort of them; and that either through the soul's surfeiting upon them, or the Lord's righteous and just removal of them, because of the excess of our affections to them. It is a point of excellent wisdom to keep the golden bridle of moderation upon all the affections we exercise on earthly things; and

never to let slip the reins of the affections, unless when they move towards God, in the love of whom there is no danger of excess.

MEDITATION VI.

On the sudden Withering of beautiful Flowers.

How fresh and orient did these flowers lately appear, when being dashed over with the morning dew, they stood in all their pride and glory, breathing out their delicious odors, which perfumed the air round about them ; but now they are withered and shrivelled up, and have neither beauty nor savor in them.

So vain a thing is the admired beauty of creatures, which so captivates the hearts and exercises a pleasing tyranny over the affections of vain man ; yet it is as suddenly blasted as the beauty of a flower. If then thou delightest in beauty, O my soul, choose that which is lasting. There is a beauty which never fades, even the beauty of holiness on the inner man. This will abide fresh as ever, and sparkle gloriously, when thy face, the seat of natural beauty, is become an abhorrent and loathsome spectacle. Even imperfect holiness on earth is a rose that breathes sweetly in the bud ; in heaven it will be full-blown, and abide in its prime to all eternity.

MEDITATION VII.

On the Tenderness of some Flowers.

How much care is necessary to preserve the life of some flowers ! They must be boxed up in the winter ; be covered with glasses in their springing up ; the finest and richest mould must be sifted about their roots ; they must be assiduously watered ; and all this is little enough, and sometimes too little, to preserve them ; whilst other common and worthless flowers grow without any help of ours ; yea, we have no less to do to rid our gardens of them, than we have to make the former grow there.

Thus stands the case with our hearts, in reference to the motions of grace and sin. Holy thoughts of God must be assiduously watered by prayer, earthed up by

meditation, and defended by watchfulness ; and yet all this is sometimes too little to preserve them alive in our souls. Alas ! the heart is a soil that agrees not with them ; they are tender things, and a small matter will kill them. But vain thoughts and unholy suggestions spread themselves and take a deep root in the heart ; they agree naturally with the soil ; so that it is almost impossible to be rid of them. It is hard to forget what it is our sin to remember.

MEDITATION VIII.

On the strange Means of preserving the Life of Vegetables.

I observe that plants and herbs are sometimes killed by frosts, and yet without frosts they would neither live nor thrive ; they are sometimes drowned with water, and yet without water they cannot subsist ; they are refreshed and cheered by the heat of the sun, and yet that sun sometimes kills and scorches them up. Thus lives my soul. Troubles and afflictions seem to kill all its comforts ; and yet without these, its comforts could not live ; the sun-blasts of prosperity sometimes refresh me, and yet those sun-blasts are the likeliest means to wither me. By what seeming contradictions is the life of my spirit preserved ! What a mystery, what a paradox is the life of a Christian !

THE END.

NAVIGATION SPIRITUALIZED.

BY

THE REV. JOHN FLAVEL.

ABRIDGED BY THE REV. C. BRADLEY.

CHAPTER I.

The Launching of a Ship.

Observation.—No sooner is a ship built, launched, rigged, victualled, and manned, than she is presently sent out into the boisterous ocean, where she is never at rest, but continually fluctuating, tossing, and laboring, until she is either overwhelmed and wrecked, or, through age, grows leaky and unserviceable, and so is knocked to pieces.

Application.—No sooner come we into the world as men or as Christians, by a natural or supernatural birth, than we are thus tossed upon a sea of troubles. “Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.” The spark no sooner comes out of the fire, than it flies up naturally; it needs not any external force, help, or guidance, but ascends from a principle in itself; so naturally, so easily does trouble rise out of sin. There is radically all the misery, anguish, and trouble in the world in our corrupt natures. As the spark lies close hid in the coals, so

does misery in sin; every sin draws a rod after it. And these sorrows and troubles fall not only on the body, in those breaches, deformities, pains, aches, diseases, to which it is subject, which are but the groans of dying nature, and its crumbling by degrees into dust again; but they fall also on all our employments and callings; Gen. iii. 17. These are full of pain, trouble, and disappointment; Hag. i. 6. We earn wages, and put it into a bag with holes, and disquiet ourselves in vain. All relations too have their burdens, as well as their comforts. It were endless to enumerate the sorrows of this kind; and yet the troubles of the body are but the body of our troubles; the spirit of the curse falls upon the spiritual and noblest part of man. The soul and body, like Ezekiel's roll, are written full with sorrows, both within and without; so that we may make the same report of our lives, when we come to die, that old Jacob made before Pharaoh, "Few and evil have the days of the years of our lives been." "For what hath man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath labored under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh no rest in the night. This also is vanity." Eccl. ii. 22.

Neither does our new birth free us from troubles, though then they are sanctified, sweetened, and turned into blessings. We put not off the human, when we put on the divine, nature; nor are we then freed from the sense, though we are delivered from the sting and curse, of them. Grace does not presently pluck out all those arrows that sin has shot into the sides of nature. "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, and within were fears," 2 Cor. vii. 5. "These are they that come out of great tribulations," Rev. vii. 14. Paul and Barnabas acquainted their new converts, that "through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God." We find the state of the church, in this world, set out by the similitude of a distressed ship at sea; "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted;" tossed, as Jonah's ship was, for the same word is used in both places; tossed, as a vessel at

sea, violently driven without rudder, mast, sail, or tacking. Nor are we to expect freedom from these troubles, until harboured in heaven. O what long catalogues of experiences do the saints carry to heaven with them, of their various exercises, dangers, trials, and marvellous preservations and deliverances out of all! And yet all these troubles without, are nothing to those within them, from temptations, corruptions, desertions. .Besides their own, there come daily upon them the troubles of others; many rivulets fall into this channel, and fill, yea, often overflow the bank. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

Reflection.—Hence should the graceless heart thus reflect upon itself—O my soul, into what a sea of troubles art thou launched forth! and what a sad case art thou in! full of trouble, and full of sin; and these mutually producing each other! And that which is the most dreadful consideration of all, is, that I cannot see the end of them. As for the saints, they suffer in the world as well as I; but it is but for a while, and then they suffer no more, "all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes;" but my troubles are but the beginnings of sorrows. If I continue as I am, I shall but deceive myself, if I conclude I shall be happy in the other world, because I have met with so much sorrow in this; for I read, that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, though consumed to ashes, with all their estates and relations, (a sorer temporal judgment than ever yet befel me) continue still in "everlasting chains, under darkness, in which they are reserved unto the judgment of the great day." These troubles of the saints are sanctified to them, but mine are fruits of the curse. They have spiritual consolations to balance them, which flow into their souls in the same height and degree, as troubles do upon their bodies; but I am a stranger to their comforts, and "intermeddle not with their joys." If their hearts be surcharged with trouble, they have a God to go to; and when they have opened their cause before him, they are eased, comforted, and their "countenance is no more sad;" but I have no interest in, nor acquaintance with this God, nor can I pray unto him in the Spirit. My griefs are shut up like

fire in my bosom, which preys upon my spirit. This is my sorrow, and I alone must bear it. O my soul, look round about thee. What a miserable case art thou in! Rest no longer satisfied in it, but look out for a Saviour. What, though I am a vile, unworthy wretch? yet he promises to love freely, and invites such as are heavy laden to him.

Hence also should the gracious soul reflect sweetly upon itself after this manner—And is the world so full of trouble? O my soul, what cause hast thou to stand admiring at the indulgence and goodness of God to thee! Thou hast hitherto had a smooth passage, compared with what others have had. How has divine wisdom ordered my condition, and cast my lot! Have I been chastised with whips? others have been chastised with scorpions. Have I had no peace without? some have neither had peace without or within, but terrors round about. Or have I felt trouble in my flesh and spirit at once? they have not been extreme, either in time or measure. And has the world been a Sodom, an Egypt, to thee? Why then dost thou thus linger in it, and hanker after it? Why do I not long to be gone, and sigh more heartily for deliverance? Why are the thoughts of my Lord's coming no sweeter to me, and the day of my full deliverance no more panted for? And why am I no more careful to maintain peace within, since there is so much trouble without? Is not this it that puts weight into all outward troubles, and makes them sinking, that they fall upon me when my spirit is dark or wounded?

CHAPTER II.

The Vastness of the Ocean.

Observation.—The ocean is of vast extent and depth. It compasses the whole earth; and as for its depth, who can discover it? The sea in scripture is called “the deep,” “the great deep,” the gathering together of the waters into one place. If the largest mountain were cast into

it, it would appear no more than the head of a pin in a tun of water.

Application.—This, in a lively manner, shadows forth the infinite and incomprehensible mercy of our God, whose mercy is said to be over all his works. In how many sweet ways is the mercy of God represented to us in the scripture! He is said to be “plenteous, abundant, rich in mercy.” His mercies are “unsearchable;” “high as the heavens above the earth;” yea, they are not only compared to the heavens, but to “the depths of the sea,” Mic. vii. 19, which can swallow up mountains as well as mole-hills; and in this sea God has drowned sins of a dreadful height and aggravation. In this sea was the sin of Manasseh drowned; yea, in this ocean of mercy did the Lord drown and cover the sins of Paul, though a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious. How has mercy ridden in triumph, and been glorified on the vilest of men! How has it stopped the slanderous mouths of men and devils! To “fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners,” to such has the sceptre of mercy been stretched forth, on their unfeigned repentance and submission; 1 Cor. vi. 9.

In the vastness of the ocean, we have also a lively emblem of eternity. Who can comprehend or measure the ocean, but God? And who can comprehend eternity, but he that is said to inhabit it? Though shallow rivers may be drained and dried up, yet the ocean cannot. And though these transitory days, months, and years, will at last expire, yet eternity will not. O it is a long word! an amazing matter! What is eternity but a constant permanency of persons and things, in one and the same state and condition for ever; putting them beyond all possibility of change? The heathens were wont to shadow it by a circle, or a snake twisted round. It will be to all of us, either a perpetual day or night which cannot be measured by hours or minutes. And as it cannot be measured, so neither can it ever be diminished. When thousands of years are gone, there is not a minute less to come. Suppose a bird were to come once in a thousand years to some vast mountain of sand, and carry away in her bill one grain in a thousand years, O what a

vast time would it be ere that immortal bird, after that rate, would carry off the mountain ! and yet in time this might be done, for there would still be some diminution; but in eternity there can be none.

There are three things in time, which are not in eternity—In time there is a succession, one generation, one year, and one day passes, and another comes; but eternity is a fixed *now*. In time there is a diminution and wasting; the more that is past, the less is there to come; but it is not so in eternity. In time there is an alteration of condition and states; a man may be poor to-day and rich to-morrow, sickly and diseased this week and well the next, now in contempt and anon in honor; but no changes pass upon us in eternity. As the tree falls at death and judgment, so it lies for ever; if in heaven, there thou art a pillar, and shalt go forth no more; if in hell, no redemption thence, but the smoke of thy torment ascendeth for ever and ever.

Reflection.—And is the mercy of God like the great deep, an ocean that none can fathom? What unspeakable comfort is this to me! may the pardoned soul say. Did Israel sing a song, when the Lord had overwhelmed their enemies in the seas? And shall not I break forth into his praise, who has drowned all my sins in the depth of mercy? O my soul, bless thou the Lord, and let his high praises ever be in thy mouth. Mayest thou not say, that he has gone to as high an extent and degree of mercy in pardoning thee, as ever he did in any? O my God, who is like unto thee, that pardonest iniquity, transgression, and sin? What mercy, but the mercy of a God, could cover such abomination as mine?

But O what terrible reflections will conscience make from hence, unto all despisers of mercy, when the sinner's eyes come to be opened too late for mercy to do them good! We have heard indeed, that the king of heaven was a merciful king, but we would make no address to him, whilst that sceptre was stretched out. We heard of balm in Gilead, and a physician there who was able and willing to cure all our wounds; but we would not commit ourselves to him. We read, that the arms of Christ were open to embrace and receive us, but we

would not go to him. O unparalleled folly! O soul-destroying madness! Now the womb of mercy is shut up, and shall bring forth no more mercies to me for ever. Now the gates of grace are shut, and no cries can open them. Mercy acted its part, and is gone off the stage; and now justice enters the scene, and will be glorified for ever upon me. How often did I hear the bowels of compassion sounding in the gospel for me! But my hard and impenitent heart could not relent; and now, if it could, it is too late. I am now past out of the ocean of mercy into the ocean of eternity, where I am fixed in the midst of endless misery, and shall never hear the voice of mercy more.

O dreadful eternity! O soul-confounding word! An ocean indeed, to which this ocean is but as a drop; for in thée no soul shall see either bank or bottom. If I lie but one night under strong pains of body, how tedious does that night seem! and how do I count the clock, and wish for day! In the world I might have had life, and would not. And now how fain would I have death, but cannot! How quick were my sins in execution! and how long is their punishment in duration! O how shall I dwell with everlasting burnings? O that God would but vouchsafe one offer more to me! But alas, all tenders and treaties are now at an end! On earth peace, but none in hell. O my soul, consider these things. Come, let us debate this matter seriously, before we launch out into this ocean.

CHAPTER III.

The Inhabitants of the Ocean.

Observation.—IT was an unadvised saying of Plato, that “the sea produces nothing memorable.” Surely there is much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God manifested in the inhabitants of the watery region. Notwithstanding the sea’s azure and smiling face, strange creatures are bred in its womb. “O Lord,” says David, “how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth

is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea also; wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts," Psal. civ. 24. We read, Lam. iv. 3, of sea-monsters, which draw out their breasts to their young. About the tropics, our seamen meet with flying fishes. How strange, both in shape and property, is the sword-fish! Even our own seas produce creatures of strange shapes, but the commonness of them takes off the wonder.

Application.—Thus does the heart of man naturally swarm and abound with strange and monstrous lusts and abominations. "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," Rom. i. 29. O what a swarm is here! And yet there are multitudes more in the depths of the heart. And it is no wonder, considering that with our fallen nature, we received the spawn of the blackest and vilest abominations. This original lust is productive of them all; James i. 14; in the depths of the heart they are conceived, and thence they crawl out of the eyes, hands, lips, and all the members. "Those things," says Christ, "which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and defile a man; for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:" even such monsters as would make a gracious heart tremble to behold. Whence come evils? was a question that much puzzled the philosophers of old; now here you may see whence they come, and where they are begotten.

Reflection.—And are there such strange abominations in the heart of man? then how is he degenerated from his primitive perfection and glory! His streams were once as clear as crystal, and the fountain of them pure; there was no unclean creature moving in them. What a stately fabric was the soul at first! and what holy inhabitants possessed the several rooms thereof! But now, as God speaks of Idumea, "The line of confusion is

stretched out upon it, and the stones of emptiness. The cormorant and bittern possess it; the owl and the raven dwell in it," Isa. xxxiv. 11. "The wild beasts of the desert lie there: it is full of doleful creatures; the satyrs dance in it, and dragons cry in those sometimes pleasant places," Isa. xiii. 21. O sad change! How sadly may we look back towards our first state, and take up the words of Job, "O that I were as in months past, as in the days of my youth; when the Almighty was yet with me, when I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, when my glory was fresh in me," Job xxix. 2, 4, 5.

Again; think, O my soul, what a miserable condition the unregenerate abide in! thus under the dominion and vassalage of divers lusts! What a tumultuous sea is such a soul! How do these lusts rage within it! how do they contest and scuffle for the throne! Hence poor sinners are hurried on to different kinds of servitude, according to the nature of that imperious lust that is in the throne; and, like the lunatic, are sometimes cast into the water, and sometimes into the fire. Well might the prophet say, "The wicked are like a troubled sea, that cannot rest." They have no peace now in the service of sin, and less shall they have hereafter, when they receive the wages of sin. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." They indeed cry "Peace, peace;" but my God does not so. The last issue and result of this is eternal death; no sooner is it delivered of its deceitful pleasures, but presently it falls in travail again, and brings forth death; Jam. i. 15.

Once more; and is the heart such a sea, abounding with such monstrous abominations? Then stand astonished, O my soul, at that free grace which has delivered thee from so sad a condition. O fall down and kiss the feet of mercy, that moved so freely and seasonably to thy rescue. Let my heart be enlarged abundantly here. Lord, what am I, that I should be taken and others left? Reflect, O my soul, upon the conceptions and bursts of lusts in the days of vanity, which thou now blushest to own. O what black imaginations, hellish desires, vile affections, were lodged within me! Who made me to differ? or how came I to be thus wonderfully sepa-

rated? Surely it is by thy free grace, and nothing else, that I am what I am; and by that grace I have escaped, to mine own astonishment, the corruption that is in the world through lust. O that ever the holy God should set his eyes on such a one! or cast a look of love towards me, in whom were legions of unclean lusts and abominations.

CHAPTER IV.

The purifying Nature of the Tides.

Observation.—SEAS are in continual motion and agitation; they have their flux and reflux, by which they are kept from putrefaction: whereas lakes and ponds, whose waters are standing, become corrupt.

Application.—Thus do regenerate souls purify themselves, and work out the corruption that defiles them; they cannot suffer it to settle within them. “He purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” “He keepeth himself that the wicked one toucheth him not.” “He despiseth the gain of oppression; he shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, stoppeth his ears from hearing blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil,” Isa. xxxiii. 15. See how all his senses and members are guarded against sin. But it is quite contrary with the wicked; there is no principle of holiness in them to oppose or expel corruption. It lies in their hearts as mud in a lake or well, which settles and corrupts more and more. Hence their hearts are compared to miry or marshy places, which cannot be healed, but are given to salt: the meaning is, that the purest streams of the gospel which cleanse others, make them worse than before, as abundance of rain will make a miry place. All the means and endeavours used to cleanse them are in vain; all the grace of God they receive in vain; “they hold fast deceit, they refuse to let it go.” Sin is not in them as floating weeds upon the sea, which it strives to expel and purge out, but as spots in the leopard’s skin, or letters fashioned and engraved in the very substance of marble

or brass, with a pen of iron, and point of a diamond, or as ivy in an old wall, that hath gotten root in it. "Wickedness is sweet to their mouths, they roll it under their tongues." No threats nor promises can divorce them from it.

Reflection.—Lord, this is the very frame of my heart, may the graceless soul say. My corruptions quietly settle in me, my heart labors not against them. I am a stranger to that conflict which is daily maintained in all the faculties of the regenerate soul. Glorified souls have no such conflict, because grace in them stands alone, and is perfectly triumphant over all opposites; and graceless souls can have no such conflict, because in them corruption stands alone, and has no other principle to make opposition to it. And this is my case, O Lord. I am full of vain hopes indeed, but had I a living and well-grounded hope to dwell for ever with so holy a God, I could not but be daily purifying myself. But O what will the end of this be? I have cause to tremble at that last and most dreadful curse in the book of God, "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." Is it not as much as if God should say, Let them alone: I will spend no more rods upon them, no more means shall be used about them; but I will reckon with them for all together in another world? O my soul, what a dismal reckoning will that be!

CHAPTER V.

The Caution of Sailors.

Observation.—How watchful and quick-sighted are seamen to prevent dangers! If the wind die away and then freshen, or if they see the sky hazy, they provide for a storm. If by the glass they see an enemy at a distance, they prepare for fight, and bear up, if able to cope with him; if not, they keep close by the wind, make all the sail they can, and bear away. If they suppose themselves, by their reckoning, near land, how often do they sound! and if upon a coast with which they are unac-

quainted, how careful are they to get a pilot that knows and is acquainted with it !

Application.—Thus watchful and suspicious ought we to be in spiritual concerns, We should study and be acquainted with Satan's wiles and policy. The apostle takes it for granted, that Christians are not ignorant of his devices. “The serpent's eye,” as one says, “would do well in the dove's head.” The devil is a cunning pirate; he puts out false colors, and ordinarily comes up to the Christian in the disguise of a friend.

O the manifold depths and stratagems of Satan to destroy souls ! Though he have no wisdom to do himself good, yet he has policy enough to do us mischief. He lies in ambush behind our lawful comforts and employments; yet, for the generality of men, how supine and careless are they, suspecting no danger ! Their souls, like Laish, dwell carelessly, their senses unguarded. O what an easy prize and conquest does the devil make of them !

Indeed, if it were with us as with Adam in innocence, or as it was with Christ in the days of his flesh (who by reason of that overflowing fulness of grace that dwelt in him, was secure from the danger of all temptations) the case then were otherwise ; but we have a traitor within, as well as a tempter without. “Our adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour :” and, like the beasts of the forest, poor souls lie down before him, and become his prey. All the sagacity, wit, policy, and foresight, of some men, is summoned to serve their bodies, and secure their fleshly enjoyments.

Reflection.—Lord, how does the care, wisdom, and vigilance, of men in temporal and external things, condemn my carelessness in the deep and dear concerns of my precious soul ! What care and labor is there to secure a perishing life, liberty, or treasure ! When was I thus solicitous for my soul, though its value be inestimable, and its danger far greater ! Self-preservation is one of the deepest principles in nature. There is not the poorest fly, or worm, but will shun danger, if it can : yet I am so far from shunning those dangers to which my

soul lies continually exposed, that I often run it upon temptations, and voluntarily expose it to its enemies. I see, Lord, how watchful, jealous, and laborious thy people are; what prayers, tears, and groans, searching of heart, mortification of lusts, guarding of senses; and all accounted too little by them. Have not I a soul to save or lose eternally, as well as they? Yet I cannot deny one fleshly lust, nor withstand one temptation. O how I am convinced and condemned, not only by others' care and vigilance, but my own too, in lesser and lower matters!

CHAPTER VI.

The Rudder of a Ship.

Observation.—It is a just cause of admiration, to see so great a body as a ship is, and when under sail too; before a fresh and strong wind, by which it is carried; as the clouds, with marvellous force and speed, yet commanded with ease by so small a thing as the helm is. The scripture takes notice of it as a matter worthy of our consideration; “Behold also the ships, which though they be great, and driven of fierce winds; yet they are turned about with a small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth,” Jam. iii. 4. Yea, Aristotle himself; that eagle-eyed philosopher, could not give a reason of it, but looked upon it as a very marvellous and wonderful thing.

Application.—To the same use and office has God designed conscience in man, which being rectified and regulated by the word and spirit of God, is to steer and order his whole conversation. Conscience is as the oracle of God, the judge and determiner of our actions, whether they be good or evil. And it lays the strongest obligation upon the creature to obey its dictates. As often as conscience from the word convinces us of any sin or duty, it lays such a bond upon us to obey it, as no power under heaven can relax or dispense with. *Angeli.*

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cannot do it, much less man; for that would be to exalt themselves above God. Now therefore it is a high and dreadful way of sinning, to oppose and rebel against conscience, when it convinces of sin and duty. Conscience sometimes reasons it out with men, and shows them the necessity of changing their way and course; arguing it from the clearest and most allowed maxims of right reason, as well as from the indisputable sovereignty of God: as, for instance, it convinceth their very reason that things of eternal duration are infinitely to be preferred to all momentary and perishing things; and that it is our duty to choose them, and make all secular and temporary concerns to stand aside and give place to them. Yet though men be convinced of this, their stubborn will stands out, and will not yield up itself to the conviction. It argues too from this acknowledged truth, that all the delight and pleasures of this world are but a miserable portion, and that it is the highest folly to adventure an immortal soul for them. Alas! what remembrance is there of them in hell? They are as the waters that pass away. What have they left of all their mirth and jollity, but a tormenting sting? It convinces them clearly, also, that in matters of deep concernment it is a high point of wisdom, to apprehend and improve the right seasons and opportunities of them. "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son." "A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment." "There is a season to every purpose," a nick of time, a happy juncture, when if a man strikes, he does his work effectually, and with much facility: such seasons conscience convinces the soul of, and often whispers thus in its ear; Now, soul, strike in; close with this motion of the Spirit, and be happy for ever; thou mayest never have such a gale for heaven any more. Now, though these are allowed to be maxims of reason, and conscience enforces them strongly on the soul, yet cannot it prevail; the proud stubborn will rebels, and will not be guided by it.

Reflection.—Ah! Lord, such a heart have I had before thee; thus obstinate, thus rebellious, thus uncontrollable by conscience. Many a time has conscience thus whis-

pered in mine ear, many a time has it stood in my way, as the angel did in Balaam's, or the cherubims that kept the way of the tree of life with flaming swords turning every way. Thus has it stood to oppose me in the way of my lusts. How often has it calmly debated the case with me alone! and how sweetly has it expostulated with me! How clearly has it convinced me of sin, danger, duty! How terrible has it menaced my soul, and set the point of the threatening at my very breast! And yet my head-strong affections will not be remanded by it. I have obeyed the voice of every lust and temptation, but conscience has lost its authority with me. Ah! Lord, what a sad condition am I in, both in respect of sin and misery! My sin receives dreadful aggravations, for rebellion and presumption are hereby added to it. I have violated the strongest bonds that ever were laid upon a creature. If my conscience had not thus warned me, the sin had not been so great and crimson-colored. Ah! this is to sin with a high hand, Numb. xv. 30; to come near to the great and unpardonable transgression, Psal. xix. 13. O how dreadful a way of sinning is this, to sin with open eyes! And as my sin is thus out of measure sinful, so my punishment will be out of measure dreadful, if I persist in this rebellion. Lord, thou hast said, such shall be beaten with many stripes. Yea, Lord, and if ever my conscience, which by rebellion is now grown silent, should be in judgment awakened in this life, O what a hell shall I have within me! how will it thunder and roar within me, and surround me with terror!

Thy word assures me, that no length of time can wear out of its memory what I have done, Gen. xlvi. 21; no violence or force can suppress it, Mat. xxvii. 4; no greatness of power can stifle it; it will take the mightiest monarch by the throat, Exod. x. 16; Dan. v. 6; no music, pleasures, or delights, can charm it, Job xx. 22. O conscience, thou art the sweetest friend, or the most dreadful enemy, in the world. Thy consolations are incomparably sweet, and thy terrors insupportable. O let me stand out no longer against conscience.

CHAPTER VII.

The Fears and Dangers of Seamen.

Observation.—We have an elegant and lively description of their fears and dangers in Psal. cvii. 25. “He commandeth and raiseth the stormy winds, which lift up the waves thereof: they mount up to heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble; they reel to and fro, they stagger like a drunken man; they are at their wits end;” or, as it is in the Hebrew, “all wisdom is swallowed up.” O what strange and miraculous deliverances have many seamen had! How often have they yielded themselves up for dead men, and verily thought the next sea would have swallowed them up! How earnestly then do they cry for mercy! Like the Cymbrians, they can pray in a storm, though they regard it not at other times; Psal. cvii. 28; Jonah i. 5, 6.

Application.—These dreadful storms discover to us at once the mighty power of God in raising them, and the abundant goodness of God in preserving poor creatures in them.

The power of God is graciously manifested in raising them. The wind is one of the Lord’s wonders. “They that go down to the sea, see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep; for he commandeth and raiseth the stormy winds.” Hence he is said in scripture to “bring them forth out of his treasury,” Psal. cxxxvii. 7. There they are locked up, and reserved; not a gust can break forth till he commands and calls for it to go and execute his pleasure. Yea, he is said to “hold them in his fist,” Prov. xxx. 4. What is more incapable of being held than the wind? yet God holds it. Although it is a strong and terrible creature, he controls and rules it: yea, the scripture sets forth God, ‘as riding upon the wings of the wind,’ Psal. xviii. 10. It is a speech borrowed from the manner of men, who when they would show their pomp and greatness, ride upon some stately horse, or chariot; so the Lord, to manifest

the greatness of his power, rides upon the wings of the wind, and will be admired in so terrible a creature.

And no less of his glorious power appears in remanding them, than in raising them. The heathens ascribe this power to their god Æolus, but we know this is the royalty and sole prerogative of the true God who made heaven and earth. It is he that "makes the storm a calm," and it is he that shifts and changes the winds from point to point, as he pleaseth; for he has appointed them their circuits. "The wind goeth towards the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and returneth again according to its circuits."

And as we should adore his power in the winds, so ought we to admire his goodness in preserving men in the height of all their fury and violence. O what a marvellous work of God is here, that men should be kept in a poor weak vessel, upon the wild and stormy ocean, where the wind has its full stroke upon them, and they are driven before it, as a wreck upon the seas; yet, I say, that God should preserve them there, is a work of infinite goodness and power. Those winds rend the very earth, mountains, and rocks; "break the cedars, yea, the cedars of Lebanon; shake the wilderness, and make the hinds to calve," which, naturalists say, bring forth with greatest difficulty: surely your preservation in such tempests, is an astonishing work of mercy. O how dreadful is the wind sometimes to you! and how does it make your hearts shake within you! If but a plank spring, or a bolt give way, you are all lost. Sometimes the Lord, for the magnifying of the riches of his goodness upon you, drives you to such exigencies, that, as Paul speaks in a like case, "all hope of being saved is taken away;" nothing but death is before your eyes. The Lord commands a wind out of his treasury, bids it go and lift up the terrible waves, lock you in upon the shore, and drive you upon the rocks, so that no art can save you; and then sends you a piece of wreck, or some other means, to land you in safety; and all this to give you an experiment of his goodness and pity, that

you may learn to fear that God is whose hand your soul and breath are.

And it may be, for the present, your hearts are much affected ; conscience works strongly, it smites you for sins formerly committed, such and such counsels of ministers or relations slighted. Now, says conscience, God is come in this storm to reckon with thee for these things. But, alas ! all this is but a morning dew ; no sooner is the storm without allayed, but all is quiet within too. How little of the goodness of God abides kindly and effectually upon the heart !

Reflection.—How often has this glorious power and goodness of God passed before me in dreadful storms and tempests at sea ! He has uttered his voice in these stormy winds, and spoken in a terrible manner by them ; yet how little have I been affected with it ? “ The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm ; ” to some he has walked in ways of judgment and wrath, sending them down in a moment to hell ; but to me in a way of forbearance and mercy. Ah ! how often have I been upon the very brink of eternity ! Had not God shifted or allayed the wind in a moment, I should have gone down into hell. What workings of conscience were then upon me ! and what terrible apprehensions had I then of my eternal condition ! What vows did I make in that distress ! and how earnestly did I then beg for mercy ! But, Lord, though thy vows are upon me, yet have I been the same ; yea, added to and filled up the measure of my sins. Neither the bonds of mercy thou hast laid upon me, nor the sacred and solemn vows I have laid upon myself, could restrain me from those ways of iniquity which then appeared so dreadful to me.

Ah ! Lord, what a heart have I ! What love, pity, and goodness, have I sinned against ! If God had but respite judgment so long, what a mercy were it ! Sure I am, the damned would account it so ; but to give me such a space to repent, ah ! what an invaluable mercy is this ! And do I thus requite the Lord, and pervert and abuse his goodness thus ? Surely, O my soul, if this be the fruit of all thy preservations, they are rather reservations

to some farther and sorcer judgments. How dreadfully will justice at last avenge the quarrel of abused mercy. How grievously did God take it from the Israelites, that they provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea, where God had wrought their deliverance in such a miraculous way! Even thus have I sinned after the similitude of their transgressions; not only against the laws of God, but against the love of God. In the last storm he shot off his warning-piece, in the next he may discharge his murdering-piece against my soul and body. O my soul, has he given thee "such deliverances as these, and darest thou again break his commandments?" O let me pay the vows that my lips have uttered in my distress, lest the Lord recover his glory from me in a way of judgment.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Skill of Sailors.

Observation.—THE mariner wants no skill and wisdom to improve several winds, and make them serviceable to his end. A bare side wind, by his skill in shifting and managing the sails, will serve his turn. He will not lose the advantage of one breath or gale, that may be useful to him. I have many times wondered to see two ships sailing in a directly opposite course by one and the same wind. Their skill and wisdom herein is admirable.

Application.—Thus prudent and skilful are men in secular and lower matters; and yet how ignorant and unskilful in the great and everlasting affairs of their souls! All their invention, judgment, wit, and memory, seem to be pressed for the service of the flesh. They can learn an art quickly, and arrive to a great deal of exactness in it; but in soul-matters they have no knowledge at all. They can understand the equator, meridian, and horizon; by the first they can tell the latitude of any place, south or north, measuring it by the degrees on the meridian; by the second they can tell you the longitude of a place, east and west, from the meridian, measuring it by the degrees

of the equator; and by the third they can discern the divers risings and settings of the stars. And so in other arts and sciences, we find men endowed with rare abilities and singular sagacity. Some have piercing apprehensions, solid judgments, stupendous memories, rare invention, and excellent elocution; but put them upon any spiritual matter, and the weakest Christian, even a babe in Christ, shall excel them therein, and give a far better account of regeneration, the work of grace, the life of faith, than these can.

Reflection.—How inexcusable then art thou, O my soul; and how mute and confounded must thou needs stand before the bar of God in that great day! Thou hadst a talent of natural parts committed to thee, but which way have they been improved? I had an understanding indeed, but it was not sanctified; a memory, but it was like a sieve, that let go the corn, and retained nothing but husks and chaff; wit and invention, but, alas! none to do myself good. O, how will these rise in judgment against me, and stop my mouth! What account shall I give of them in that day!

Again; are men, otherwise prudent and skilful, such fools in spiritual things? Then let the poor weak Christian, whose natural parts are blunt and dull, admire the riches of God's free grace to him. O what an astonishing consideration is this, that God should pass by men of the profoundest natural parts, and choose me, even poor me, whose natural faculties and endowments, compared with theirs, are but as lead to gold! Thus under the law he passed by the lion and eagle, and chose the lamb and dove. O how should it make me to exalt grace, as Christ does upon the same account; “I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes.” And let it ever be a humbling consideration to me; for who made me to differ? Is not this one principal thing God aims at, in calling such as I am, that boasting may be excluded, and himself alone exalted?

CHAPTER IX.

The Vigilance of Sailors in taking Advantage of Wind and Tide.

Observation.—SEAMEN are very watchful to take their opportunity of wind and tide, and it much concerns them so to be; the neglect of a few hours, sometimes loses them their passage, and proves a great detriment to them. They know the wind is an uncertain, variable thing; they must take it when they may: they are unwilling to lose one breath, that may be serviceable to them. If a prosperous gale offers, and they are not ready, it repents them to lose it, as much as it would repent us to see a vessel of good wine tapped and run to waste.

Application.—There are also seasons and gales of grace for our souls, golden opportunities of salvation afforded to men, the neglect of which proves the loss and ruin of souls. God has given unto man a day of visitation, which he has limited, and keeps an exact account of every year, month, and day that we have enjoyed it. The longest date of it can be but the time of this life; this is our day to work in, and upon this small wire the weight of eternity hangs. But sometimes the season of grace is ended before the night of death comes; the accepted time is gone; men frequently out-live it, Luke xix. 44; 2 Cor. vi. 2. Or, if the outward means of salvation be continued, yet the spirit many times withdraws from those means, and ceases any more to strive with men; and then the blessing, power, and efficacy, are gone from them, and instead thereof a curse seizeth the soul, Heb. vi. 7, 8; Jer. vi. 29.

Therefore it is a matter of high importance to our souls to apprehend these seasons. How pathetically does Christ bewail over Jerusalem upon this account! “O that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things of thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” If a company of seamen are set ashore upon some remote uninhabited island, with this advice, to be aboard again exactly at such an hour, else they must be left behind; how does it concern them to be punctual to their time!

The lives of those men depend upon a quarter of an hour. Many a soul has perished eternally, the gospel leaving them behind in their sins, because they knew not the time of their visitation.

Reflection.—What golden seasons for salvation hast thou enjoyed, O my soul! What halcyon days of gospel-light and grace hast thou had! How have the precious gales of grace blown to no purpose upon thee! and the Spirit waited and striven with thee in vain! “The kingdom of heaven hath suffered violence.” Multitudes have been pressing into it in my days, and I myself have sometimes been almost persuaded, and not far from the kingdom of God. I have gone as far as conviction for sin and misery; yea, I have been carried by the power of the gospel, to resolve and purpose to turn to God, and become a new creature; but sin has been too subtle and deceitful for me: I see, my resolutions were but as an early cloud or morning dew; and now my heart is cold and dead again, settled upon its lees. Ah! I have cause to fear and tremble, lest God should have left me under that curse, “Let him that is filthy be filthy still.” I fear I am become as a miry place, that shall not be healed by the streams of the gospel, but given to salt, and cursed into perpetual barrenness. O Lord, wilt thou leave me so? and shall thy Spirit strive no more with me? Then it had been good for me that I had never been born. O if I have trifled out this season, and irrecoverably lost it, then I may take up my lamentation, and say, “My harvest is past, my summer is ended, and I am not saved.”

Every creature knows its time, even the turtle, crane, and swallow, know the time of their coming; how brutish am I, that have not known the time of my visitation! O thou, that art the Lord of life and time, command one gracious season more for me, and make it effectual to me, before I go hence and be seen no more.

CHAPTER X.

Commerce.

Observation.—THE most wise God has so dispensed his bounty to the several nations of the world, that one standing in need of another's commodities, there might be a sociable commerce and traffic maintained amongst them all, and all combining in a common league, may, by the help of navigation, exhibit mutual succours to each other.

Application.—Thus has God distributed the more rich and precious gifts and graces of his Spirit among his people; some excelling in one grace, some in another, though every grace, in some degree, is in them all. As in nature, though there are all the faculties in all, yet some faculties are in some more lively and vigorous than in others; some have a more vigorous eye, others a more ready ear, others a more voluble tongue; so it is in spirituals. Abraham excelled in faith, Job in patience, John in love. These were their peculiar excellencies. All the elect vessels are not of one quantity; yet even those that excel others in some particular grace, come short in other respects of those they otherwise excel, and may be much improved by converse with such as in some respects are much below them. The solid, wise, and judicious Christian may want that liveliness of affection and tenderness of heart that appear in the weak; and one that excels in gifts and utterance may learn humility from the very babes in Christ. And one principal reason of this different distribution is to maintain fellowship among them all; “The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you.” As in a family where there is much business to be done, even the little children bear a part, according to their strength; “The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, the women knead the dough;” so in the family of Christ, the weakest Christian is serviceable to the strong.

There are precious treasures in these earthen vessels, for which we should trade by mutual communion. The preciousness of the treasure should draw out our desires and endeavours after it; and the consideration of the

brittleness of those vessels in which it is kept, should cause us to be the more expeditious in our trading with them, and make the quicker returns. For when those vessels, I mean the bodies of the saints, are broken by death, there is no more to be gotten out of them. That treasure of grace which made them such profitable, pleasant, and desirable companions on earth, then ascends with them into heaven, where every grace receives its perfection; and then, though they are ten thousand times more excellent and delightful than ever they were on earth, yet we can have no more communion with them till we come to glory ourselves. Now therefore it behoves us to be enriching ourselves by communication of what God has dropt into us, and improvement of it. We should do by saints, as we do by some choice book lent us for a few days, we should fix in our memories or transcribe all the choice notions we meet with in it, that they may be our own when the book is called for, and we can have it no longer by us.

Reflection.—Lord, how short do I come of my duty in communicating to others, or receiving good by them! My soul is either empty and barren, or, if there be any treasure in it, yet it is but as a treasure locked up in some chest, the key of which is lost, when it should be opened for the use of others. Ah Lord, I have sinned greatly, not only by vain words, but sinful silence. I have been of little use in the world.

How little also have I got by communion with others! Some, it may be, that are of my own age or judgment, or that I am otherwise obliged to, I delight to converse with; but O where is that largeness of heart and general delight I should have to and in all thy people? How many of my old dear acquaintance are now in heaven, whose tongues were as choice silver, while they were here! And, blessed souls! how communicative were they of what thou gavest them! O what an improvement should I have made of my talent this way, had I been diligent! Lord, pardon my neglect of those sweet and blessed advantages. O let all my delight be in thy saints, who are the excellent of the earth. Let me never go out of their company, without a heart more warmed,

quickened, and enlarged, than when I came amongst them.

CHAPTER XI.

The Stability of Rocks.

Observation.—THE rocks, though situate in the boisterous and tempestuous ocean, yet abide firm and immoveable from age to age. The impetuous waves dash against them with great violence, but cannot remove them out of their place. And although sometimes they wash over them and make them disappear, yet there they remain fixed and impregnable.

Application.—This is a lively emblem of the condition of the church, amidst all the dangers and oppositions, wherewith it is encountered and assaulted in the world. These metaphorical waves roar and beat with violence against it, but with as little success as the sea against the rocks. “Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Nay, this rock is not only invincible in the midst of violence, but it also breaks in pieces all that dash against it. “In that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it,” Zech. xii. 3; an allusion to one that essays to roll some great stone up a hill, which at last returns upon him, and crushes him to pieces.

And the reason why it is thus firm and impregnable, is not from itself; for, alas! so considered, it is weak and liable to be ruined; but from the almighty power of God, which guards and preserves it day and night. “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early,” when the morning appears; which denotes God’s assiduous and constant help and succour, which is extended in all dangers, as constantly as the sun arises. And this assiduous succour to his people, and their great security thereby, is set forth in the

scriptures by a variety of metaphors and emblems. "I, saith the Lord, will be a wall of fire round about it," Zech. ii. 5. Some think this phrase alludes to the cherubim that kept the way of the tree of life with flaming swords: others, to the fiery chariots round about Dathan, where Elisha was; but most think it to be an allusion to an ancient custom of travellers in the desarts, who, to prevent the assaults of wild beasts in the night, made a circular fire round about them, which was as a wall to them. Thus will God be to his people a wall of fire, which none can scale. So in Exod. iii. 3, we have an excellent emblem of the church's low and dangerous condition, and admirable preservation. You have there both a marvel and a mystery. The marvel was to see a bush on fire and yet not consumed. The mystery is this—the bush represented the sad condition of the church of Egypt; the fire flaming upon it, the grievous afflictions, troubles, and bondage, it was in there; the remaining of the bush unconsumed, the strange and admirable preservation of the church in those troubles. It lived there as the three noble Jews, untouched in the midst of a burning fiery furnace: and the angel of the Lord in a flame of fire, in the midst of the bush, was nothing else than the Lord Jesus Christ, powerfully and graciously present with his people amidst all their dangers and sufferings. The Lord is exceedingly tender over them, and jealous for them, as that expression imports, "He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of mine eye," Zech. ii. 8. He that strikes at them, strikes at the face of God, and at the most excellent part of the face, the eye, and at the most tender and precious part of the eye, the apple of the eye. And yet this people of whom he uses this tender and dear expression, were none of the best of Israel either; but the residue that staid behind in Babylon, when their brethren were gone to rebuild the temple; and yet over these, he is as tender as a man is over his eye.

Reflection.—And is the security of the church so great, and its preservation so admirable amidst all storms and tempests? Then why art thou so prone and subject to despise, O my soul, in the day of Sion's trouble? See-

sible thou wast of it, and oughtest to be ; but there is no reason to hang down the head through discouragement, much less to forsake Zion in her distress, for fear of being ruined with her.

What David spake to Abiathar, 1 Sam. xxii. 23, that may Zion speak to all her sons and daughters in all their distresses ; " Though he that seeketh thy life seeketh mine also, yet with me shalt thou be in safeguard." God has entailed great salvation and deliverances upon Zion ; and blessed are all her friends and favorers ; the Rock of ages is her defence. Fear not therefore, O my soul, though the hills be removed out of their place, and cast into the midst of the sea. O let my faith triumph, and my heart rejoice upon this ground of comfort. I see the same rocks now, and in the same place and condition they were in many years ago. Though they have endured many storms, yet there they abide ; and so shall Zion, when the proud waves have spent their fury and rage against it.

CHAPTER XII.

The Industry of Seamen.

Observation.—How exceeding solicitous and adventurous are seamen for a small portion of the world ! How prodigal of strength and life for it ! They will run to the ends of the earth, engage in a thousand dangers, in the hope and on the probability of getting a small estate. Hopes of gain make them willing to adventure their liberty, yea, their life, and encourage them to endure heat, cold, and hunger, and a thousand straits and difficulties, to which they are frequently exposed.

Application.—How hot and eager are men's affections after the world ! and how remiss and cold towards things eternal ! They are careful, and troubled about many things; but seldom do they mind the great and necessary matter. They can rise early, go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness ; but when do they so deny themselves for their poor souls ? Their heads are full of

designs and projects to get or advance an estate. "We will go into such a city, continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain;" this is the master-design, which engrosses all their time, studies, and contrivances. The will has past a decree for it, the heart and affections are fully let out to it; "they will be rich." This decree of the will, the Spirit of God takes deep notice of; and indeed it is the clearest and fullest discovery of a man's portion and condition; for what is highest in the estimation, first and last in the thoughts, and upon which we spend our time and strength with delight, certainly that is our treasure. The heads and hearts of saints are full of solicitous cares and fears about their spiritual condition; the great design they engage in, to which all other things are but things by the bye, is to make sure their calling and election. This is the weight and bias of their spirit. If their hearts stray and wander after any other thing, this brings them back again.

Reflection.—Lord, this has been my manner from my youth, may the carnal-minded man say. I have been laboring for the meat that perisheth; disquieting myself in vain; full of designs and projects for the world, and unwearyed in my endeavours to obtain an earthly treasure; yet therein I have either been checked and disappointed by Providence, or if I have obtained it, yet I am no sooner come to enjoy that content and comfort I promised myself in it, but I am ready to leave it all, to be stript out of it by death, and in that day all my thoughts perish. But, in the mean time, what have I done for my soul? When did I ever break a night's sleep or deny myself for it? Ah fool that I am! to nourish and pamper a vile body, which must shortly lie under the clods, and become a loathsome carcase; and, in the mean time, neglect and undo my poor soul, which partakes of the nature of angels, and must live for ever. I have kept others' vineyards, but mine own vineyard I have not kept. I have been a perpetual drudge and slave to the world; in a worse condition has my soul been, than the slaves who are condemned to the mines. Lord, change my treasure and change my heart. O let it suffice that I have been thus long laboring in the fire.

for very vanity. Now gather up my heart and affections to thyself, and let my great design be, to secure a special interest in thy blessed self, that I may once say, "To me to live is Christ."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Food provided for the Inhabitants of the Sea.

Observation.—THERE are multitudes of living creatures in the sea. The psalmist says, there are in it, "things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts," and we read, that when God blessed the waters, he said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth." Yet all those multitudes of fish and fowl, both in sea and land, are provided for; "Thou givest them their meat in due season: thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing," Psal. cxlv. 15.

Application.—If God takes care for the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air, much more will he care and provide for those that fear him. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them," Isa. xii. 17. "Take no thought for your life," saith the Lord, "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; or for the body what ye shall put on:" and he supports this with an argument from God's providence over the creatures, and enforces it with a "much rather;" Matt. vi. 25, 31. God would have his people be without carefulness, that is, anxious care; and to "cast their care upon him, for he careth for them." There are two main arguments suggested in the gospel, to quiet and satisfy the hearts of saints in this particular: the one is, that the gift of Jesus Christ amounts to more than all these things come to; yea, in bestowing him, he has given that which virtually and eminently comprehends all these inferior mercies in it; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not

with him freely give us all things?" Rom. viii.. 32. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Another argument is, that God gives these temporal things to those he never gave his Christ unto, and therefore there is no great matter in them; yea, to those who, in a little while, are to be thrust into hell; Psal. xvii. 14. Now if God clothes and feeds his enemies, if he clothes the grass, which to-day is in its pride and glory in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, into hell; how much more will he clothe and provide for you that are his saints?

This God who feeds all the creatures, is your Father, and a Father that never dies; and therefore you shall not be as exposed orphans, who are the children of such a Father; for he hath said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." I have read of a good woman, who in all wants and distresses was wont to encourage herself with this saying "The Lord liveth." But once, being in a deep distress and forgetting that consolation, one of her little children came to her, and said, "Mother, why weep you so? What, is God dead now?" Which words, from a child, shamed her out of her unbelieving fears, and quickly brought her spirits to rest. O saint, whilst God lives, thou canst not want what is good for thee.

How sweet a life might Christians live, could they but bring their hearts to a full subjection to the disposing will of God! to be content not only with what he commands and approves, but also with what he allots and appoints! It was a sweet reply that a woman once made upon her death-bed, to a friend that asked whether she were more willing to live, or die? She answered, "I am pleased with what God pleases." "Yea," said her friend, "but if God should refer it to you, which would you choose?" "Truly," said she, "if God would refer it to me, I would refer it to him again." Ah blessed life, when the will is swallowed up in the will of God, and the heart at rest in his care and love, and pleased with all his appointments!

Reflection.—I remember my fault this day, may many a gracious soul say. O how faithless and distrustful have I been, notwithstanding the great security God has

given to my faith, both in his word and works! O my soul, thou hast greatly sinned therein, and dishonored thy Father. I have been worse to my Father, than my children are to me. They trouble not their thoughts with what they shall eat, or drink, or put on; but trust to my care and provision for that; yet I cannot trust my Father, though I have ten thousand times more reason so to do, than they have to trust me. Surely, unless I were jealous of my Father's affection, I could not be so dubious of his provision for me. I should rather wonder that I have so much, than repine that I have no more. I should rather have been troubled that I have done no more for God, than that I have received no more from God. I have not proclaimed it to the world by my conversation, that I have found a sufficiency in him alone, as the saints have done; Hab. iii. 17. How have I debased the faithfulness and all-sufficiency of God, and magnified these earthly trifles, by my anxiety about them! Had I had more faith, a light purse would not have made so heavy a heart. Lord, how often hast thou convinced me of this folly, and put me to the blush, when thou hast confuted my unbelief, so that I have resolved never to distrust thee more! and yet new exigencies renew this corruption. How contradictory also have my heart and my prayers been! I pray for blessings conditionally, and with submission to thy will; I dare not say to thee, "I must have them;" yet this has been the language of my heart and life. O convince me of this folly!

CHAPTER XIV.

The Saltness of Sea-Water.

Observation.—THE waters of the sea, in themselves, are brackish and unpleasant, yet being exhaled by the sun and condensed into clouds, they fall down in pleasant showers; or if drained through the earth, their property is thereby altered, and that which was so salt in the sea, becomes exceeding sweet and pleasant in the springs.

Application.—Afflictions in themselves are evil, very bitter and unpleasant; Heb. xii. 11; yet not morally and intrinsically evil, as sin is; for if so, the holy God would never own it for his own act as he does in Mic. iii. 2; but he always disclaims sin; James i. 3. Besides, if it were evil, it could, in no case or respect, be the object of our election and desire, as in some cases it ought to be, Heb. xi. 25; but it is evil, as it is the fruit of sin, and grievous unto sense. But though it be thus brackish and unpleasant in itself, yet, passing through Christ and the covenant, it loses that ungrateful property, and becomes pleasant in the fruits and effects thereof unto believers. Yea, such are the blessed fruits thereof, that they are to “account it all joy when they fall into divers afflictions.” David could bless God that he was afflicted, and many a saint has done the same.

Sometimes the Lord sanctifies afflictions to discover the corruption that is in the heart; Deut. viii. 2; it is a furnace to show the dross. When a sharp affliction comes, then the pride, impatience, and unbelief, of the heart appear. When the water is stirred, then the mud and filthy sediment, that lay at the bottom, rise. Little, says the afflicted soul, did I think there had been in me that pride, self-love, distrust of God, carnal fear, and unbelief, that I now find. O where is my patience, my faith, my glory, in tribulation? I could not have imagined the sight of death would have so appalled me, the loss of outward things have so pierced me. Now what a blessed thing is this to have the heart thus discovered.

Sanctified afflictions discover also the emptiness and vanity of the creature. Now the Lord has stained its pride, and veiled its tempting splendor, by this or that affliction; and the soul sees what an empty, shallow, deceitful thing it is. The world is then only great in our eyes, when we are full of sense and self: but now affliction makes us more spiritual, and then it is nothing. It drives us nearer to God, makes us see the necessity of the life of faith, with multitudes of other benefits.

But yet these sweet fruits of afflictions do not naturally, and of their own accord, spring from it; no, we may as well look for grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles, as

for such fruits from affliction, till Christ's sanctifying hand and art have passed upon them.

The reason why they become thus sweet and pleasant is, because they run now in another channel. Jesus Christ has removed them from mount Ebal to Gerizim. They are no more the effects of vindictive wrath, but paternal chastisement. A teaching affliction is to the saints, the result of all the offices of Jesus Christ. As a king, he chastens; as a prophet, he teaches by chastening; and, as a priest, he has purchased this grace of the Father, that the dry rod might blossom, and bear fruit. Behold, then, a sanctified affliction is a cup, whereinto Jesus has wrung and pressed the juice and virtue of all his mediatorial offices. Surely that must be a cup of generous, royal wine, a cup of blessing to the people of God.

Reflection.—Hence may the unsanctified soul draw matter of fear and trouble, even from its unsanctified troubles. And thus it may reflect upon itself—O my soul, what good hast thou gotten by all or any of thy afflictions? God's rod has been dumb to thee, or thou deaf to it. I have not learned one holy instruction from it. My troubles have left me the same, or worse, than they found me. My heart was proud, earthly, and vain before, and so it remains still. They have not purged out, but only given vent to, the pride, murmur, and atheism of my heart. I have been in my afflictions, as that wicked Ahaz was in his, who, “in the midst of his distress, yet trespassed more and more against the Lord.” When I have been in storms at sea or troubles at home, my soul within me has been as a raging sea, casting up mire and dirt. Surely this rod is not the rod of God's children; I have proved but dross in the furnace, and I fear the Lord will put me away as dross, as he threatens to do to the wicked; Psal. cxix. 119.

Hence also should gracious souls draw much encouragement and comfort amidst all their troubles. O these are the fruits of God's fatherly love to me! Why should I fear in the day of evil, or tremble any more at affliction? Though they seem as a serpent at a distance, yet are they a rod in the hand. O blessed be that skilful and gracious

hand, which makes the rod, the dry rod, to blossom, and bear such precious fruit !

Lord, what a mystery of love lies in this dispensation, that sin, which first brought afflictions into the world, is now itself carried out of the world by affliction ; Rom. v. 12. Isa. vii. 9 ! O what can frustrate my salvation, when those very things that seem most to oppose it, are made subservient to it, and, contrary to their own nature, do promote and further it ?

CHAPTER XV.

The Bounds of the Ocean.

Observation.—It is a wonderful work of God to limit and bound such a vast and furious creature as the sea, which, according to the judgment of many learned men, is higher than the earth ; and that it has a propensity to overflow it, is evident both from its nature and motion ; were it not that the great God has laid his law upon it. And this is a work wherein the Lord glories, and will be admired. “Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth ;” which it is clear they would do, were they not thus limited. So Job xxxviii. 8 ; “Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb ? I brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

Application.—And no less is the glorious power and mercy of God discovered in bridling the rage and fury of Satan and his instruments, that they break not in upon the inheritance of the Lord, and destroy it. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain,” Psal. lxxvi. 10 ; by which it is more than hinted, that there is a world of rage and malice in the hearts of wicked men, which fain would, but cannot, vent itself, because the Lord restrains, or, as it is in the Hebrew, “girds it up.” Satan is the envious one, and his rage is great against the people of God ; but

God holds him and all his instruments in a chain of providence; and it is well for God's people that it is so. They are limited as the sea, and so the Lord in a providential way speaks to them, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no further." Sometimes he ties them up so short, that they cannot touch his people, though they have the greatest opportunities and advantages. "When they were but few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it; when they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," Psal. cv. 12. And sometimes he permits them to touch and trouble his people, but then sets bounds and limits to them, beyond which they must not pass. "Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days," Rev. ii. 10. Here are four remarkable limitations upon Satan and his agents in reference to the people of God; a limitation as to the persons, not all, but some; a limitation of the punishment, a prison, not a grave, not hell; a limitation upon them as to the end, for trial, not ruin; and, lastly, as to the duration, not as long as they please, but ten days.

Reflection.—O my soul, what marrow and fatness, comfort and consolation, mayest thou derive from this truth in the darkest day of trouble! Thou seest how the flowing sea drives to overwhelm the earth. Who has arrested it in its course, and stopt its violence? Who has confined it to its place? Certainly none other than the Lord. When I see it threaten the shore with its proud, furious, and insulting waves, I wonder it does not swallow up all; but I see it no sooner touch the sands which God has made its bounds, than it retires, and, as it were, with a kind of submission, respects those limits which God has set it: thus the fiercest element is repressed by the feeblest things. Thou seest also how full of wrath and fury wicked men are, how they rage like the troubled sea, and threaten to overwhelm thee, and all the Lord's inheritance; and then the floods of ungodly men make thee afraid: yet are they restrained by

an invisible, gracious hand, that they cannot execute their purpose, nor perform their enterprize. How full of devils and devilized men is this lower world ! Yet, in the midst of them all, hast thou hitherto been preserved. O my soul, admire and adore that glorious power of God, by which thou art kept unto salvation. Is not the preservation of a saint in the midst of such hosts of enemies as great a miracle, though not so sensible, as the preservation of those three noble Jews in the midst of the fiery furnace, or Daniel in the den of lions ? For there is as strong a propensity in Satan and wicked men, to destroy the saints, as in the fire to burn, or a lion to devour. O then let me cheerfully address myself to the faithful discharge of my duty, and stand no longer in a slavish fear of creatures, who can have no power against me but what is given them from above. And no more shall be given than shall turn to the glory of God, Psal. lxxvi. 10 ; and the advantage of my soul, Rom. viii. 28.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Compass.

Observation.—Of how great use and necessity is the compass to seamen ! Though they can coast a little way by the shore, yet they dare not venture far into the ocean without it. It is their guide, and directs and shapes their course for them ; and if by the violence of wind and weather, they are driven beside their due course, yet by the help of this they are brought right again. It is wonderful to consider, how, by the help of this guide, they can run in a direct line many hundred leagues, and at last fall in with the smallest island, which is, in the ocean, but as the head of a small pin upon a table.

Application.—What the compass and all other mathematical instruments are to the navigator, that and much more is the word of God to us in our course to heaven. This is our compass to steer our course by, and it is truly touched. He that orders his conversation by it shall

safely arrive in heaven at last. "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy."

This word is as necessary to us in our way to glory, as a lamp or lanthorn is in a dark night; Psal. cxix. 105; that is, a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts; 2 Pet. i. 19. If any that profess to know it and own it as a rule, miss heaven at last, let them not blame the word for misguiding them, but their own negligent and deceitful hearts, that shuffle in and out, and shape not their course and conversation according to its prescriptions.

What blame can you lay upon the compass, if you steer not by it? How many are there, that neglecting this rule, will coast it to heaven by their own reason! No wonder such fall short, and perish in the way. This is a faithful guide, and brings all that follow it to a blessed end. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory," Psal. lxxiii. 24. The whole hundred and nineteenth psalm is spent in commendation of its transcendent excellency and usefulness. Luther professed that he prized it so highly, that he would not take the whole world in exchange for one leaf of it. Lay but this rule before you, and walk accurately by it, and you cannot be out of your way to heaven; "I have chosen the way of truth, or the true way; thy judgment have I laid before me." Some indeed have opened their detracting blasphemous mouths against it; and the papists generally slight it, making it a lame, imperfect rule; yea, making their own traditions the touchstone of doctrines, and foundation of faith; they set up their inventions above it; and thus do they make it void, or, as the word signifies, "unlord it," take away its authority as a rule. But those that have thus slighted it, and followed the by-paths into which their corrupt hearts have led them, take not hold of the paths of life, and are now in the depths of hell. All other lights to which men pretend, in the neglect of this, are but false fires that will lead men into the pits and bogs of destruction at last.

Reflection.—And is thy word a compass, to direct my course to glory? O where am I then like to arrive at last, who in all my course have neglected it, and steered

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No. XVII.

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according to the counsel of my own heart? Lord, I have not made thy word the man of my counsel, but consulted with flesh and blood. I have not enquired at this oracle, nor studied it, nor made it the guide of my way; but walked after the sight of my eyes, and the lust of my heart. Whither, Lord, can I come at last, but to hell? Some have slighted thy word professedly, and I have slighted it practically. I have a poor soul embarked for eternity; it is now floating on a dangerous ocean; rocks and sands are on every side; I go a-drift before every wind of temptation, and know not where I am. Lord, convince me of the danger of this condition. O convince me of my ignorance of thy word, and the fatal consequences and issue thereof. Lord, let me now resolve to study, prize, and obey it; hide it in my heart, that I may not sin against it. Open my understanding, that I may understand the scriptures; open my heart to entertain it in love. O thou that hast been so gracious to give a perfect rule, give me also a perfect heart to walk by that rule to glory.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Tides.

Observation.—THE sea has its alternate course and motion, its ebbings and flowings. No sooner is it high water, than it begins to ebb again, and leave the shore naked and dry, which but a little before it covered and overflowed. And as its tide, so also its waves are the emblem of inconstancy, still rolling and tumbling, this way and that, never fixed and quiet. “As fickle as a wave,” is a common proverb. “He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed;” “it cannot rest.”

Application.—Thus mutable and inconstant are all outward things. There is no depending on them: there is nothing of any substance, or any solid consistence in them. “The fashion of this world passeth away.” It is a high point of folly to depend upon such vanities.

“ Why wilt thou set thine eyes to fly upon that which is not ? For riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle towards heaven,” Prov. xxiii. 5. “ In flying to us,” says Augustine, “ they have scarcely a sparrow’s wings ; but in flying from us, wings as an eagle.” And those wings they are said to make to themselves ; that is, the cause of their transitoriness is in themselves ; the creature is subjected to vanity by sin ; they are sweet flowers, but withered presently, “ as the flower of the grass, so shall the rich man fade away.” The man is like the stalk or grass, his riches are the flower of the grass ; his glory and outward beauty, the stalk, is soon withered, but the flower much sooner. This is either withered upon it, or blown off from it, while the stalk abides. Many a man outlives his estate and honor, and stands in the world as a bare dry stalk in the field, whose flower and beauty are gone ; one puff of wind blows it away, one easterly blast shrivels it up ; 1 Pet. iv. 24.

How mad a thing is it then, for any man to be lifted up with pride, on such a vanity as this is ! to build so lofty and over-jetting a roof on such a feeble, tottering foundation ! We have seen meadows full of such curious flowers, mown down and withered ; men of great estates impoverished suddenly ; and when, like a meadow that is mown, they have begun to recover themselves again, the Lord has sent “ grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth ;” Amos vii. 2. Just as the grasshoppers and other creatures devour the second tender herbage as soon as the field begins to recover its verdure, so after men have been blasted by Providence, and begin to florish again, then comes some new affliction and blasts all. None have more frequent experience of this than merchants and seamen, whose estates are floating ; and yet such as have had the highest security in the eye of reason, have notwithstanding experienced the vanity of these things. Henry IV. a potent prince, was reduced to such a low ebb, that he petitioned for a prebend’s place in the church of Spire. Gallimer, king of the Vandals, was brought so low, that he sent to his friends for a spunge, a loaf of bread, and a harp : a spunge to dry up his tears, a loaf of bread to maintain his life,

and a harp to solace him in his misery. The story of Belisarius is very affecting. He was a famous general of an army, yet having his eyes put out and stripped of all earthly comforts, he was led about crying, "Give one penny to poor Belisarius." Instances in history of this kind are infinite. Men of the greatest estates and honors have become the very scorn of fortune.

Yea, and not only wicked men that have gotten their estates by rapine and oppression, have lived to see them thus scattered by Providence; but sometimes godly men have had their estates, how justly soever acquired, thus scattered by Providence also. Who ever had an estate better gotten, better secured, or better managed, than Job? Yet all was overthrown and swept away in a moment; though in mercy to him, as the issue demonstrated.

O then what a vanity is it to set the heart, and let out the affections, on such things! You can never depend too much upon God, nor too little upon the creature. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded and trust in uncertain riches."

Reflection.—Are all earthly things thus transitory and vain? Then what a reproach and shame is it to me, that the men of this world should be more industrious and eager in the prosecution of such vanities, than I am to enrich my soul with solid and everlasting treasure! O that a sensual lust should be more operative in them, than the love of God in me! O my soul, thou dost not lay out thy strength and earnestness for heaven as they do theirs for the world. I have indeed higher motives and a surer reward than they; but as I have an advantage above them herein, so they have an advantage above me in the strength and entireness of the principle by which they are influenced. What they do for the world, they do with all their might; they have no contrary principle to oppose them; their thoughts, strength, and affections, are entirely carried in one channel; but I find "a law in my members warring against the law of my mind." I must strive through a thousand difficulties and contradictions to the discharge of a duty. O my God, shall not my heart be more enlarged in zeal, love, and delight

in thee, than their hearts are after their lusts? O let me once find it so.

Again; is the creature so vain and unstable? Then why are my affections so hot and eager after it? And why am I so apt to doat upon its beauty, especially when God is staining all its pride and glory? Jer. xlv. 5, 6. O that my spirit were raised above the creature, and my conversation more in heaven! O that like the angel, who came down from heaven, and set one foot upon the sea, and another upon the earth, having a crown upon his head, so I might set one foot upon all the cares, fears, and terrors of the world, and another upon all the tempting splendor and glory of the world, treading both underfoot in the dust, and crowning myself with nothing but spiritual excellencies and glory!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Tempests.

Observation.—THE waves of the sea are sometimes raised by God's commission, to be executioners of his threatenings upon sinners. When Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord to Tarshish, "the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest, so that the ship was like to be broken," Jonah i. 4. These were God's bailiffs to arrest the runaway prophet. And in Psal. cxlviii. 8, the stormy winds are said to "fulfil his word;" not only his word of command, in rising when God bids them, but his word of threatening also. And hence it is called "a destroying wind," Jer. li. 1; and a "stormy wind in God's fury," Ezek. xiii. 13.

Application.—If these are the executioners of God's threatenings, how sad then is their condition who put forth to sea under the guilt of all their sins! Or, if God should commission the winds to go after and arrest them for all they owe him, where are they then? How dare they put forth under the power of a divine threat, before all is cleared betwixt God and them? Sins in scripture are called debts; they are debts to God, because they

render the sinner obnoxious to God's judgments, even as pecuniary debts oblige him who has not wherewith to pay, to suffer punishment. All sinners must undergo the curse, either in their own person, according to the express letter of the law, Gal. iii. 10; or in their Surety, according to the tacit intent of the law, manifested to be the mind of the lawgiver, Gen. iii. 13, 14. Now he who by faith has interest in this Surety, has his discharge, sealed in the blood of Christ; all process at law, or from the law, is stopt; Rom. viii. 1. But if thou be an impenitent, persisting sinner, thy debt remains upon thine own score; "and be sure thy sin will find thee out, wherever thou goest." God's revenging hand for sin will be upon thee. Thou mayest lose the sight and memory of thy sins, but they lose not the sight of thee; they follow after, as the hound does the fleeting game upon the scent, till they have fetched thee up; and then consider, how "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God." How soon may a storm arrest and bring thee before the bar of God!

Reflection.—O my soul, what a sad case art thou in, if this be so? Are not all thy sins yet upon thine own score? Hast thou not made light of Christ, and that precious blood of his, and persisted in thy rebellion against him? And what can the issue of this be, but ruin? There is abundant mercy indeed for returning sinners; but the gospel speaks of none for persisting and impenitent sinners. And though many who are going on in their sins, are overtaken by grace, yet there is no grace promised to such as go on in sin. O if God should arrest me by the next storm, and call me to an account for all that I owe him, I must then lie in the prison of hell to all eternity; for I can never pay the debt; nay, all the angels in heaven cannot satisfy for it. Being without Christ, I am under all the curses in the book of God; a child of Hagar. Lord, pity and spare me a little longer. O discover thy Christ unto me, and give me faith in his blood; and then thou art fully satisfied at once, and I am discharged for ever. O require not the debt at my hand, for then thou wilt never be satisfied, nor I acquitted. What profit, Lord, is there in my blood? O my soul, make haste to this Christ, thy refuge city: thou knowest not how soon the avenger of blood may overtake thee.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Casting overboard of Merchandise in a Storm.

Observation.—IN storms at sea the richest commodities are sometimes cast overboard ; they hesitate not about it, when life and all is in jeopardy and hazard. “The mariners cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it,” Jonah i. 5. And, Acts xxvii. 18, 19. “they cast out the very tacklings of the ship.” How highly soever men prize such commodities, yet reason tells them, it were better these should perish, than life. Satan himself could say, “Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life,” Job i.

Application.—And surely it is every way as reasonable, that men should mortify, cast out, and cut off, their dearest lusts, rather than that their immortal souls should sink and perish in the storm of God’s wrath. Life indeed is a precious treasure, and highly valued by men ; and we find men willing to part with their estates, limbs, or any outward comfort, for the preservation of it. The woman in the gospel spent all that she had on physicians for her health, a blessing below life. Some men indeed do much overvalue their life, and part with Christ and peace of conscience for it; but he that thus saves it, shall lose it. Now if life be worth so much, what then is the soul worth ? Alas ! life is but “a vapor, which appear-eth for a little while, and then vanisheth away,” Jam. iv. 14.

Life indeed is worth more than all the world ; but my soul is worth more than ten thousand lives. Nature teaches you to value the first so high, and grace should teach you to value the second much higher. Now this is the case—either you must part with your sins or with your souls ; if these be not cast out, both must sink together. “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die,” Rom. viii. 13. God says to you in this case, as to Ahab when he spared Benhadad, “Because thou hast let go a man whom God hath appointed to destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life.” 1 Kings, xx. 42. Guilt will raise a storm of wrath, as Jonah did, if not cast out.

Reflection.—And must sin or the soul perish? Must my life, yea, my eternal life, suffer for it, if I spare it? O then let me not be cruel to mine own soul in sparing my sin! O my soul, this foolish pity and cruel indulgence will be thy ruin. If I spare it, God has said, “he will not spare me,” Deut. xxvi. 20. It is true the pains of mortification are sharp, but yet they are easier than the pains of hell. To cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, is hard; but to have my soul cut off eternally from God is harder. Is it as easy, O my soul, to burn for thy sins in hell, as to mortify them on earth? Surely, it is “profitable for me, that one member perish, rather than that all be cast into hell,” Matt. v. 24. I see the merchant willing to part with rich wares if embarked with them in a storm, and those who have diseased limbs willingly stretch them out to be cut off to preserve life; and shall I be willing to endure no difficulties for my soul? Christ reckoned souls worth his blood; and is not my soul worth my self-denial? Lord, let me not warm a snake in my bosom, that will at last sting me to the heart.

CHAPTER XX.

The Power of God in calming the Sea.

Observation.—WHEN the sea works and is tempestuous, it is not in the power of any creature to appease it. When the Egyptians would by their hieroglyphics express an impossibility, they did it by the picture of a man treading upon the waves. It is related of Canute, an ancient Danish king, that when a mighty storm of flattery arose upon him, he appeased it by showing that he could not appease the sea. One of his courtiers told him as he rode near the sea-side, that he was Lord of the sea, as well as of the land. “Well,” said the king, “we shall see that by and by.” And then he went to the water-side, and with a loud voice cried, “O ye seas and waves, come no further; touch not my feet.” But the sea came up notwithstanding this charge, and confuted the flattery.

But Jesus Christ has command of the waves. It is said of him, that "he rebuked them." He quiets them with a word, "Peace, be still;" as one would hush a child to rest.

Application.—Conscience, when awakened by the terrors of the Lord, is like a raging, tempestuous sea. It works, and it is not in the power of any creature to quiet it. Spiritual terrors, as well as spiritual consolations, are not known till felt. O when the arrows of the Almighty are shot into the spirit, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against the soul; when the venom of those arrows drink up the spirits, and those armies of terrors charge violently and successively upon it, as in Job vi. 4, what creature then is able to stand before them? Even God's own dear children have felt such terrors as have distracted them; Psal. lxxxi. 15. Conscience is the seat of guilt. It is like a burning glass; it contracts the beams of the threatenings, twists them together, and reflects them on the soul, until it is on fire. If the wrath of the king be like the roaring of a lion, then what is the Almighty's wrath? It is "burning wrath," Job xix. 11; "tearing wrath," Psal. l. 22; "surprizing wrath," Job xx. 23; and "abiding wrath," Job iii. 36. In this case no creature can relieve: all are physicians of no value. Some under these terrors have thought hell more tolerable, and have thrust themselves out of the world into it, to avoid these gnawings. Yet Jesus Christ can quickly calm these spiritual waves also, and hush them with a word; yea, he is the physician, and no other. It is the sprinkling of his blood, which, like a cooling fomentation, allays these heats within. That blood of sprinkling speaks peace, when all others have practised on the soul to no purpose; and the reason is, because he is a Person in whom God and man, justice and mercy, meet and kiss each other.

Reflection.—Can none appease a troubled conscience but Christ? Then learn, O my soul, to understand, and daily more and more to savor that glorious name, even Jesus, who delivers not only from the wrath to come, but from that which is felt here also. O if the foretaste of hell be so intolerable, if a few drops, let fall on the con-

science in this life, be so insufferable, what is it to have all the vials poured out to eternity, when there shall be nothing to divert, mitigate, or allay it?

Here men have somewhat to abate their terrors, some hopes of mercy, at least a possibility : but there is none there. O my soul, how art thou loaded with guilt! and what wouldest thou be, should God arouse that sleepy lion in thy bosom! My condition is not at all the better because my conscience is quiet. The day is coming when it must awake, and will lighten and thunder terribly within me, if I flee not to Christ before. O Lord, " who knoweth the power of thy wrath?" O let me not carry this guilt out of the world with me, to maintain those everlasting flames. Let me give no sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, till I feel the comfort of that blood of sprinkling, which alone speaketh peace.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Plenty and Variety of Fish.

Observation.—THE Providence of God in furnishing us with so great a plenty and variety of fish, is not slightly to be passed over. We have not only several sorts of fish in our own seas, which are caught in their seasons; but from several distant parts, every year is brought home, not only enough to supply our own nation, but large quantities are also yearly carried to other countries; by which trade many thousand families subsist.

Application.—But now what returns do we make to heaven for these mercies? O what notice is taken of the good hand of Providence, which thus supplies and feeds us with the blessings of the sea? I fear there are but few who own, or act in submission to it, and are careful to return, according to the benefit received. Men do not consider, that "their works are in the hand of God," Eccl. ix. 1. And even those who have the most immediate dependence upon Providence, as merchants and seamen, are yet very prone to undertake designs in the confidence of their own wisdom and industry; not looking higher for

the blessing. They often "sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their drag, because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous," Hab. i. 16; that is, they attribute what is due to God unto the creature. Now this is a sin highly provoking to the Lord; for in what degree the heart cleaves to the second cause, in the same degree it departs from the living God, Jer. x. 5.

And how do you think the blessed God will bear to see himself thus debased, and the creature thus exalted into his place? to see you carry yourselves to the creature as to a God, and to the blessed God as to a creature? Surely this is a great and common evil and such as will blast all, if not timely discovered and lamented. If we make flesh our arm, it is just with God to wither and dry up the arm. Do we not look upon second causes as if they had the main hand in our business? And with a neglectful eye pass by God, as if he came in but collaterally, and by the bye, into it? But all endeavors will be unsanctified, if not successless, in which God is not eyed and engaged. "It is in vain for you to rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows; for so he giveth his beloved sleep," Psalm cxxxvii. 2; that is, it is to no purpose for men to tire their spirits, and rack their consciences for an estate; the true way of acquiring and enjoying the creature, is by submitting quietly to the will of God, in a prudent, and diligent, yet moderate, use of lawful means. Nothing can thrive with us till then.

Reflection.—Why then should I disquiet myself in vain; and rob myself of my peace, by these unbelieving cares and distractions? O this has been my sin! I have acted as if my condition had been at my own disposal. I have eyed creatures and means too much, and God too little. How have my hands hung down with discouragement, when second causes have disappeared, or worked contrary to my designs, ready to transfer the fault to this thing, or that! And how apt am I to be vainly lifted up with carnal confidence, when I see myself competently furnished with creature defence and provision! O what a God-provoking wickedness is this! How often has Providence checked my carnal presumption,

and dashed many hopeful projects ! Yet have I not owned it, and submitted to it, as I ought. O it is a wonder that this has not closed the hand of Providence against me, and pulled down a curse upon all ! O Lord, let me now learn to acquaint myself with thee ; "then shall I decree a thing, and it shall be established," Job xxii. 28.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Skill of Fishermen.

Observation.—THERE is skill in fishing. They who go to sea on a fishing voyage, go provided with their craft, as they very fitly call it, without which they can do nothing. They have their lines, hooks of several sizes, and their bait. They carefully observe their seasons : when the fish fall in, then they ply their business day and night.

Application.—But how much more skilful and industrious is Satan to ensnare and destroy souls ! The devil makes a voyage as well as you ; he has his baits for you, as you have for the fish ; he has his devices and wiles to catch souls ; 2 Cor. ii. 11 ; Eph. vi. 11. He is a serpent, an old serpent ; too crafty for man in his perfection, much more in his fallen state, his understanding being injured by the fall, and all his faculties poisoned and perverted.

Divines observe four steps or degrees of Satan's tempting power. *First* ; he can find out the constitutional evils of men ; he knows to what sin their natures are more especially prone, and inclinable.

Secondly ; he can propound suitable objects to those lusts ; he can exactly and fully hit every man's humor ; as Agrippa mixed her poison in that meat which her husband loved best.

Thirdly ; he can inject, and cast motions into the mind, to close with those tempting objects ; as it is said of Judas, "the devil put it into his heart."

Fourthly ; he can solicit, irritate, and provoke, the heart,

and by continual restless solicitations weary it; and hereby he often draws men to commit such things as startled them in the first instance.

All this he can do, if he meets with difficulties; yet does he not act to the utmost of his skill and power at all times and with all persons; neither indeed need he do so. The very propounding of an object is enough to some, without any further solicitation; the devil makes an easy conquest of them.

And, besides all this, his policy appears in the election of place, time, and instruments, to tempt by: and thus are poor souls caught, "as fishes in an evil net." The carnal man is led by sense, as the beast; and Satan handles and suits him accordingly. He uses all sorts of motives, not only internal and intellective, but external and sensitive also; as the sparkling of the wine, when it gives its color in the glass; the harlot's beauty, whose eye-lids are snares; hiding always the hook, and concealing the issue from his victims. He promises them gain and profit, pleasure and delight, and all that is tempting, with assurance of secrecy. By these he fastens the fatal hook in their jaws, and thus "they are led captive by him at his will."

Reflection.—And is Satan so subtle and industrious to entice souls to sin? Does he thus cast out his golden baits, and allure souls with pleasure to their ruin? Then how does it behove thee, O my soul, to be jealous and wary! How strict a guard should I set upon every sense! O let me not so much regard how sin comes towards me in the temptation, as how it goes off at last! The day in which Sodom was destroyed, began with a pleasant sunshine, but ended in fire and brimstone. I may promise myself much content in the satisfaction of my lusts; but O how certainly will it end in my ruin! Ahab doubtless promised himself much content in the vineyard of Naboth, but his blood paid for it in the portion of Jezreel. The harlot's bed was perfumed, to entice the simple young man, Prov. vii. 17; but those chambers of delight proved the chambers of death, and her house the way to hell. O with what a smiling face does sin come on towards me in its temptations! How does it tickle the carnal fancy and please the deceived heart! But what a dreadful is

she has it! The delight is quickly gone, but the guilt thereof remains to amaze and terrify the soul with ghastly forms, and dreadful representations of the wrath of God. As sin has its delights attending it to enter and fasten it, so it has its horrors and stings to torment and wound: and as certainly as I see those go before it to make a way, so certainly shall I find these follow after, and tread upon its heels. No sooner is the conscience awakened, but all those delights vanish as a night-vision, or as a dream when one awakes; and then I shall cry, Here is the hook, but where is the bait? Here is the guilt and horror, but where the delight that I was promised? And I, whither shall I now go? Ah, my deceitful lusts, you have enticed and left me in the midst of all miseries!

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Failure of Trade.

Observation.—THERE are many sad complaints that trade fails; and though all countries are open and free for traffic, and there is a general peace with all nations, yet there seems to be a dearth of trade, a secret curse upon it. Men run from country to country, and come losers home.

Application.—That prosperity and success in trade are from the blessing of God, I suppose few are so atheistical, as openly to deny or question. The devil himself acknowledges it; “Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land,” Job i. 10. It is not in the power of any man to get riches; “Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth,” Deut. viii. 18. It is his blessing that makes good men rich, and his permission that makes wicked men rich. That maxim came from hell, “Every man is the maker of his own condition.” “The good of man is not in his own hand,” Job xxi. 16. “Promotion cometh not from the east nor the west,” Psal. lxxvi. 6.

This being acknowledged, it is evident that in all

disappointments and want of success in our callings, we ought not to stick in second causes, but to look higher, even to the hand and disposal of God: for whose it is to give the blessing, his also it is to withhold it. And this is as clear in scripture as the other. It is the Lord that takes away the fishes of the sea, Hos. iv. 3; Zeph. i. 3; it is he that curseth our blessings, Mal. ii. 3.

This God does as a punishment for sin, and for the abuse of mercies; and therefore in such cases we ought not to rest in general complaints to one another, or of one another, but search what those sins are, which provoke the Lord to inflict such judgments.

And here I must request your patience, to hear a plain and close word of conviction. My brethren, I am persuaded these are the sins, among many others, that provoke the Lord to blast your employments.

1. Our undertaking designs without prayer. Alas! how few of us begin with God, interest him in our dealings, or ask counsel and direction at his mouth! Prayer is that which sanctifies all employments and enjoyments, 1 Tim. iv. 5. The very heathen could say, that "they must begin with God." O that we had more prayers and fewer oaths!

2. Injustice and fraud in our dealings—a sin to which merchants are especially prone, as appears by that expression in Hos. xii. 7.

3. An over-earnest endeavour after the world. Men make this their business; they will be rich: and hence it is, that they are not only unmerciful to themselves, in wearying and wasting their own spirits with anxious cares, but to such also as they employ; neither regarding the souls or bodies of men; scarcely affording them the liberty of the Lord's day; or if they have it, yet they are so worn out with incessant labors, that that precious time is spent either in sleep or idleness. This over-doing hath not been the least cause of our undoing:

4. Our abuse of prosperity when God gave it, making God's mercies the food and fuel of our lusts. When we had affluence of outward blessings, "this made us kick against God," as, Deut. xxxiii. 15; "forget God," Deut. iv. 14; yea, grow proud of our strength and riches, Esch.

xvi. 13; Jer. ii. 31. O how few of us in the days of our prosperity, behaved ourselves as good Jehoshaphat did? "He had silver and gold in abundance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of God's commandments," not in pride and insolence, 2 Chron. xvii. 5, 6.

Reflections.—Are these the sins that blast our blessings, and wither our mercies? O then let me cease to wonder it is no better, and rather admire that it is no worse with me; that my neglect of prayer, injustice in dealings, earthly-mindedness, and abuse of former mercies, have not provoked God to strip me naked of all my enjoyments. Let me humbly accept from the Lord the punishment of my iniquities, and lay my hand upon my mouth. And O that these disappointments might convince me of the creature's vanity, and cause me to drive on another trade for heaven; then shall I adore thy wisdom in rendering from me these idolized enjoyments. When I had them, my heart was a perpetual drudge to them. How did I then forget God, neglect my duty, and not mind my eternal concerns! If these had not perished, in all probability I should have perished. My God, let my soul prosper, and then a small portion of these things will afford me more comfort, than ever I had in their greatest abundance. "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked," Psal. xxxvii. 16.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Preying of Fishes on one another.

Observation.—THERE are fishes of prey in the sea, as well as birds and beasts of prey on the land. Our seamen tell us, how the devouring whales, sharks, dolphins, and other fishes, follow the smaller fish, and devour multitudes of them. It is common with us in our own seas to find several smaller fish in the bodies of the greater ones; yea, I have often heard seamen say, that the poor little fry, when pursued, are so sensible of the danger, that they have sometimes seen multitudes of

them cast themselves upon the shore and perish there, to avoid the danger of being devoured.

Application.—Thus merciless and oppressive are wicked men, whose “tender mercies are cruel.” We see the like cruelty in our extortioners and over-reaching sharks ashore, who grind the faces of the poor, and regard not the cries of the fatherless and widows, but fill their houses with the gain of oppression. These are, by the Holy Ghost, compared to the fishes of the sea, Hab. i. 13. This is a crying sin, yea, it sends up a loud cry to heaven for vengeance: “If thou afflict the widow and the fatherless, and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry,” Exod. xxii. 23. Nay, God will not only hear their cry, but avenge their quarrel. That is a remarkable text, 1 Thes. iv. 6, “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.” This word “avenger” is used only once more in the new testament, Rom. xiii. 4; and there it is applied to the civil magistrate, who is to see execution done upon offenders. But now this is a sin that sometimes may be out of the reach of man’s justice, and therefore God himself will be their avenger. You may overpower the poor in this world, and, it may be, they cannot contend with you at man’s bar; therefore God will bring you before his bar.

Reflection.—Turn in upon thyself, O my soul, and consider whether thou hast not been guilty of this crying sin. Have I not, when a servant, overreached and defrauded others, and filled my master’s house with violence and deceit? and so brought myself under that dreadful threatening, Zeph. i. 9. Or since I came to trade and deal upon mine own account, have not the balances of deceit been in my hand? I have perhaps kept many in my service and employment; have not I used their labors without reward? and so am under that wo, Jer. xxii. 13; or not given them wages proportionable to their work? or by bad payment, and unjust deductions and allowances, defrauded them of a part of their due? Mal. iii. 5; or at least delayed payment, out of a covetous disposition to gain by it; whilst their necessities in the mean time cried aloud for it? and so sinned against God’s express com-

mands, Deut. xxiv. 14; Lev. xix. 30; or have I not persecuted such as God hath smitten? Psal. lxix. 26; and rigorously exacted the utmost of my due, though the hand of God has gone out against them, breaking their estates? O my soul, examine thyself upon these particulars. Rest not quiet until this guilt be removed by the application of the blood of sprinkling. Hath not the Lord said, that "they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy?" And is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? of him who has said, he will take vengeance for these things?

CHAPTER XXV.

The Taking down of Sails in a Storm.

Observation.—In storms at sea, wise navigators will not spread much sail. They then furl up the sails. It is no time then to show their bravery.

Application.—When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, it is no time then to make mirth. It is a provoking evil, and commonly God severely punishes it. Of all persons, such fare worst in the common calamity. "Wo to them that are at ease in Sion, that are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Amos vi. 1. It may be, they did not laugh at him, or break jests upon him; but they did not condole with him. And what shall be their punishment? "Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive:" God will begin with them first. That too is a terrible text in Isa. xxii. 12; and it should make the hearts of such as are guilty in this way to tremble: "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to mourning, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, killing sheep, drinking wine." And what is the issue of this? "Surely, this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die." O dreadful word! Surely sympathy is a debt we owe to Christ mystical. Whatever our constitution, condition, or personal immunities be, yet when God calls to mourning, we must hear and obey that call. David was a

king, a man of a sanguine and cheerful constitution : yet who more sensible of the evil of his times than he ? Rivers of water ran down his eyes at the consideration of them. Melancthon was so affected with the miseries of the church in his days, that he seemed to take little or no notice of the death of his child, whom he entirely loved. At such a time we may “ say of laughter, Thou art mad ; and of mirth, What doth it !”

Reflection.—Blush then, O my soul, for thy levity and insensibility under God’s angry dispensations. How many of the precious sons and daughters of Zion lie in tears abroad, while I have been “ nourishing my heart as in a day of slaughter ! The voice of God hath cried to the city, and men of understanding have heard its voice ;” but I have been deaf to that cry. How loth, my God, have I been to urge my sensual heart to acts of sorrow and mourning ! Thou hast bid me weep with them that weep, but my vain heart cannot comply with such commands. Ah, Lord ! if I mourn not with Zion, neither shall I rejoice with her.

O were mine eyes opened, and my heart sensible and tender, I might see cause enough to melt into tears, and like that Christian Niobe, in Luke vii. 38. to lie weeping at the feet of Christ. Lord, what stupidity is this ! Shall I laugh, when thou art angry, and thy children weeping and trembling ? Then I may justly fear, lest when they shall sing for joy of heart, I shall howl for vexation of spirit,” Isa. lxv. 13. Surely, O my soul, such laughter will be turned into mourning either here or hereafter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Leaks.

Observation.—THE smallest leak, if not timely discovered and stopt, is enough to sink a ship of the greatest burden ; therefore seamen are wont frequently to try what water is in the hold ; and if they find it increasing upon them, they ply the pump, and presently set the

carpenters to search for it and stop it; and till it be found, they cannot be quiet.

Application.—What such a leak is to a ship, that is the smallest sin neglected to the soul; it is enough to ruin it eternally. For as the greatest sin discovered, lamented, and mourned over, by a believer, cannot ruin him; so the least sin indulged, covered, and connived at, will certainly prove the destruction of the sinner. No sin, though ever so small, is tolerated by the pure and perfect law of God. The “commandment is exceeding broad;” not as if it gave men a latitude to walk as they please, but “broad,” that is, extending itself to all our words, thoughts, actions, and affections; laying a law upon them all; conniving at no evil in any man; 1 Pet. ii. 1.

And as the word gives no allowance for the least sin, so it is the very nature of sincerity and uprightness, to set the heart against every way of wickedness; Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24; Job xxxi. 13; and especially against that sin which was its darling in the days of its vanity; Psal. xviii. 23.

Again; the soul that has had a saving sight of Jesus Christ, and a true discovery of the evil of sin, in the glass both of the law and gospel, can account no sin small. He knows the demerit of the smallest sin is God’s eternal wrath, and that not the least sin can be remitted without the shedding and application of the blood of Christ, which blood is of infinite value and price.

God’s people know, that little as well as great sins, are dangerous, deadly, and destructive in their own nature. A little poison will destroy a man. Adrian was choaked with a gnat; Cæsar stabbed with bodkins. A man would have thought that Adam’s sin was no great matter; yet what dreadful work did it make! It was not as a single bullet to kill himself only, but as a chain-shot, which cut off all his poor miserable posterity. Indeed no sin can be little, because the object against whom it is committed, is so great; whence it receives a kind of infiniteness in itself; and because the price paid to redeem us from it is so invaluable.

Reflection.—And is the smallest sin ruinous in its own

nature? and will it certainly prove the ruin of the soul that hides and covers it? O then let my spirit accomplish a diligent search. Look to it, O my soul, that no sin be indulged by thee. Set these considerations as so many flaming swords in the way of thy carnal delights and lusts. Let me never say of any sin as Lot did of Zoar, "It is a little one, spare it." Shall I spare that which cost the blood of Jesus Christ? The Lord would not spare him, when "he made his soul an offering for sin;" neither will he spare me, if I defend and hide it; Deut. xxix. 20. If my heart were right and my conversation sound, that lust, whatever it be, that is so favored by me, would especially be abhorred and hated. Whatever my convictions and reformations have been, yet if there be but one sin retained and delighted in, this keeps the devil's interest in my soul. And though for a time he seems to depart, yet at last he will return with seven worse spirits, and this is the sin that will open the door to him, and deliver up my soul. Lord, let me make thorough work of it; let me cut it off, and pluck it out, though it be as a right hand or eye. Shall I come so near the kingdom of God, and yet stick at a small matter, and lose all for want of one thing? Lord, let me shed the blood of the dearest lust for his sake, who shed his dearest blood for me.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Trade Winds.

Observation.—THOUGH in most parts of the world the winds are variable, and blow from every part of the compass, by reason whereof sailing is slow and dangerous, yet about the equinoctial, seamen meet with a trade-wind blowing, for the most part, one way; and there they sail jocund before it, and scarcely need to lower a topsail for some hundreds of leagues.

Application.—ALTHOUGH the people of God meet with many seeming hindrances in their way to heaven, which are like contrary winds to a ship, yet they are from the

day of their conversion to the day of their complete salvation, never out of a trade-wind's way to heaven. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 21. This is a most precious scripture, pregnant with its consolation, to all believers in all conditions, a pillar of comfort to all distressed saints. Let us look a little closely into it.

"We know." Mark the certainty and evidence of the proposition. It is not built on a guess or remote probability, but on the knowledge of the saints. We know it, and that partly by divine revelation, God has told us so; and partly by our own experience, we find it so.

"That all things;" not only things that lie in a natural and direct tendency to our good, as ordinances, promises, and blessings; but even such things as have no natural fitness and tendency to such an end; as afflictions, temptations, corruptions, desertions. All these help onward. They

"Work together;" not all of them directly, and of their own nature and inclination; but by being overruled and determined to such an issue by the gracious hand of God.

Things which seem really opposite to their good, yet eventually contribute to it. Afflictions and desertions seem to work against us, but being once put into the rank and order of causes, they work together with such blessed instruments as word and prayer, to a happy issue. And though the faces of these things that so agree and work together, look contrary ways, yet there are, as it were, secret chains and connexions of Providence betwixt them, to unite them in their issue. There may be many instruments employed about one work, and yet not communicate counsels or hold intelligence with each other. Joseph's brethren, the Midianites, and Potiphar, knew not one another's mind, nor aimed at one end, much less the end that God brought about by them; one acts out of revenge, another for gain, a third out of policy; yet all meet together at last in the issue which God had designed to bring about by them, even Joseph's advancement. Even so it is here, Christian,

there are more instruments at work for thine eternal good than thou art aware of.

Reflection.—Cheer up then, O my soul, and lean upon this pillar of comfort in all distresses. Here is a promise for me, that, like the philosopher's stone, turns all into gold that it touches. This promise is my security. However things go in the world, my God "will do me no hurt." Nay, he will do me good by every dispensation. O that I had but a heart to make all things work for his glory, who thus causes every thing to work for my good. My God, dost thou turn every thing to my advantage? O let me turn all to thy praise; and if by every thing thou work my eternal good, then let me "in every thing give thanks."

But ah! how foolish and ignorant have I been! even as a beast before thee! How hath my heart been disquieted, and apt to repine at thy dispensations, when they have crossed my will! not considering that my God faithfully pursues my good, even in those things that cross, as well as in that which pleases me.

Blessed Lord, what a happy condition are all thy people in, who are within the line of this promise! All things friendly and beneficial to them; friends helpful; enemies helpful; every thing conspiring and conduced to their happiness! With others it is not so; nothing works for their good; nay, every thing works against it: their very mercies are snares, and their prosperity destroys them; even the blessed gospel itself is a savor of death to them: when evil befalls them, "it is an only evil," Ezek. vii. 5; that is, an evil not turned into good to them; and as their evils are not turned into good, so all their good is turned into evil. As this promise has an influence on all that concerns the people of God, so the curse has an influence on all the enjoyments of the wicked. O my soul, bless the Lord, who has cast thy lot into so pleasant a place, and given thee so glorious a heritage, as this promise is.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Necessity for a skilful Pilot in a Storm.

Observation.—In fair weather, when there is sea-room enough, then every common person can guide the ship; the pilot may then lie down and take his rest; but in great storms and stress of weather, or when near the dangerous shore, then the most skilful pilot is put to it; then he shows the utmost of his art and skill, and yet sometimes all is too little. They are, as the scripture speaks, “at their wit’s end,” know not what to do more; but are forced to commit all to the mercy of God and the seas.

Application.—In the storms and tempests of affliction and trouble, there are the most evident and full discoveries of the wisdom and power of our God: it is indeed continually active for his people in all conditions; “Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” “He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth.” His people’s dangers are without intermission, therefore his preservations are so too. But now when they come into the strait of affliction and deadly dangers, which threaten like rocks on every side; now the wisdom of their God rides triumphantly and visibly upon the waves of that stormy sea: and this infinite wisdom is then especially discovered in these particulars—

1. In leaving them still somewhat in the lieu and room of those comforts of which they are deprived; so that they see God exchanges their comforts, and that for the better; and this supports them. Christ’s bodily presence is removed, but the Spirit was sent in the room of it, which was better; John xiv. 1.

2. In doubling their strength, as he doubles their burdens. It is observed, that the saints have many times very strong and sweet consolation a little before their greatest trials: and this is so ordinary, that commonly when they have had their extraordinary consolations from God, they have then looked for some eminent trial. The Lord appeared to Abraham, and sealed the covenant

to him, and then put him upon that great trial of his faith. So the disciples; it was commanded them that they should "tarry in Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high." The Lord knew what a hard providence they were likely to have, and what great oppositions and difficulties they must encounter in publishing the everlasting gospel to the world; and therefore first prepares and endows them with power from on high, with eminent measures of the gifts and graces of the Spirit; as faith, patience, self-denial. So Paul had first his revelations, then his buffetings.

3. In coming in so opportunely in the time of their great distress, with relief and comfort. "Then the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on them;" As a martyr cried out to his friend Austin, at the very stake, "He is come, he is come."

4. In appointing and ordering the several kinds of afflictions to several saints, and allotting to every one that very affliction, and no other, which is most suitable to his condition: which afflictions, like so many medicines, are prepared for that very malignant humor that predominates most in them. Peter's sin was self-confidence, God permits him to fall by denying Christ; which doubtless was sanctified to his good in that particular. Hezekiah's sin was vain-glory, therefore spoilers are sent to take away his treasures.

5. In the duration of their troubles; they shall not lie always upon them. Our God is a God of judgment; Is. xxx. 18; knows the due time of removing it, and is therein punctual to a day; Rev. ii. 10.

Reflection.—If the wisdom of God do thus triumph and glorify itself in the distresses of the saints, why should I fear in the day of evil? Why does my heart faint at the foresight and apprehension of approaching trouble? Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer, O my soul. If thy God will thus be with thee in the fire and water, thou canst not perish. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet let me fear no evil, whilst my God is thus with me. Creatures cannot do what they please; his wisdom limits and overrules them all to gracious and sweet ends. If my God cast me into

the furnace to melt and try me, yet I shall not be consumed there; for he will sit by the furnace himself all the while I am in it, and curiously look into it, observing when it has done its work, and then will presently withdraw the fire. O my soul, bless and adore this God of wisdom, who himself will see the ordering of all thine afflictions, and not trust it in the hands of men or angels.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Depths of the Sea.

Observation.—THE ocean is so deep, that no eye can discover what lies in the bottom thereof. What lies there, lies obscure from all eyes but the eyes of God.

Application.—Thus are the judgments of God and the ways of his providence profound and unsearchable. “Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep;” that is, his providences are secret, obscure, and unfathomable; but even then and in those providences, his righteousness stands up like the great mountains, visible and apparent to every eye. Though the saints cannot see the one, yet they can clearly discern the other, Jer. xii. 1. Jeremiah was at a stand; so was Job in the like case, Job xii. 7; so was Asaph, Psal. lxxiii; and Habakkuk, i. 3. These wheels of providence are dreadful for their height; Ezeck. i. 18. There are deep mysteries of providence, as well as of faith. It may be said of some of them, as of Paul’s epistles, that they “are hard to be understood.” Darkness and clouds are round about the throne of God. No man can say what will be the particular issue and event of some of his dispensations. Luther seemed to hear God say to him, when he was importunate to know his mind in some particular providence, I am a God not to be traced. “His way is in the sea, his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.” Who can trace footsteps in the bottom of the sea? “The angels have their hands under their wings.” The hand

either the symbol of strength, or the instrument of
tion: where these hands are put forth, they work
eactually, but very secretly; they are hid under their
ngs. There are some of God's works that are such
trets, as that they may not be inquired into; they are to
believed and adored, but not pried into, Rom. xi. 33.
hers may be inquired after, but yet are so profound,
at few can understand them; "The works of the Lord
e great, sought out of all those that have pleasure
erein," Psal. cxi. 2. When we come to heaven, then
these mysteries, as well in the works as in the word
God, will lie open to our view.

Reflection.—O then why is my heart disquieted, be-
use it cannot sometimes discern the way of the Lord,
d see the connexion and dependence of his providen-
l dispensations? Why art thou so perplexed, O my
al, at the confusions and disorders that are in the
eld? I know that goodness and wisdom sits at the
nn; and though the vessel of the church be tossed
d distressed in times of trouble, yet it shall not perish.
it not enough for me that God has condescended so
for my satisfaction, as to show me plainly the ultimate
d general issue of all these mysterious providences?
less I am able to take the height of every particular,
all I presume to call the God of heaven to account?
ust he render a reason of his ways, and give an ac-
unt of his matters to such a worm as I am? Be silent,
my soul, before the Lord. Subscribe to his wisdom,
d submit to his will whatsoever he does. However it
, yet God is good to Israel; the event will manifest it
be all over a design of love. I know not how to re-
ncile them to each other, or many of them to the pro-
se; yet are they all harmonious, and the certain means
accomplishing the promises. O what a favor is this,
it in the midst of the greatest confusions in the world,
d has given such abundant security to his people.
it it shall be well with them; Amos ix. 8; Eccles.
l. 12.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Multitudes that the Sea has swallowed up.

Observation.—WHAT multitudes of men has the sea devoured! Thousands have made their graves in it. What numbers of men have been ingulphed together in sea-fights, or storms, or inundations! Certainly the dead which are there, are innumerable.

Application.—But though the sea has received so many thousand bodies of men into its devouring throat, yet it is not the absolute lord or proprietor of them, but rather a steward intrusted with them, till the Lord require an account of them; and then it must deliver up all it hath received, even to a man. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it,” Rev. xx. 11, 12.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is a doctrine full of singular consolations to believers, and most clearly asserted in scripture. And it is well for us that this point is so plainly revealed; because as it is a most comfortable truth to the people of God, so there is scarcely any truth that lies under more prejudice, as to sense or reason, and is more difficult to be received, than this is. The Epicureans and Stoicks laughed Paul to scorn when he preached it to them. And, indeed, if men set up reason as the only judge of supernatural things, it is incredible to think, that a body should be restored that has been burnt to ashes, and those ashes scattered in the wind; or when drowned in the sea, and there devoured by several fishes, and those again devoured by others. But yet this is not to be objected to the almighty power of God, that gave them their first being. Difficulties and impossibilities are for men, but not for him. “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?”

Reflection.—And must I rise again? Then, Lord, how am I concerned to get union with Christ whilst I live! It is only by virtue thereof that my resurrection can be made comfortable and blessed to me. Let my body lie where it will, in earth or sea; let my bones be scattered, and flesh devoured by worms or fish; I know thou canst, and wilt reunite my scattered parts; and in this body I must stand before thine awful tribunal, to receive according to what I have done therein. Thou that commandest me to stand forth amongst the noblest rank of creatures, when I had no being, and sawest my substance, being yet imperfect, canst as easily reduce me to that being again. What though reason vote it impossible, and sense incredible? Though all these difficulties and incumbrances grow upon my faith, yet I know my body is not lost for ever; the sound of thy last and dreadful trumpet, shall awaken me; and thy mighty power, to which all things are possible, shall bring me before thy bar.

O Lord, I know that I shall stand in that great assembly at the last day, when multitudes, multitudes, even all the sons and daughters of Adam, shall appear together. O if I die ungodly, it were good for me that there were no resurrection; for then those eyes which have been windows of lust, must behold Christ the Judge, not as a Redeemer, but as a Revenger. That tongue which has vented so much of the filthiness of my heart, will then be struck speechless before him; and this flesh which I have so pampered and provided for, will be condemned to everlasting flames. O my God, let me make sure work for such a day. If I now get real union with thy Son, I shall awake with singing out of the dust; and then, as thou saidst to Jacob, so wilt thou say to me, when I go down into the sea, or grave, “Fear not to go down into the deep; for I will surely bring thee up again.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

Rocks near the Shore.

Observation.—THOUGH seamen meet with violent storms, yet if they have sea-room enough, they are not much dismayed; but if they find themselves near the shore, they look upon their condition as very dangerous: the sight of the shore is to them, as Solomon speaks of the morning in another case, like the shadow of death. For one ship swallowed up in the ocean, many perish upon the coast.

Application.—The greatest straits and difficulties that many saints meet with, are when they come nearest to heaven, and have almost finished their course. Heaven indeed is a glorious place, the spacious and royal mansion of the great King; but it has a strait and narrow entrance. O the difficulty of arriving there! What earnest contention and striving, even to an agony! Multitudes put forth, and by profession are bound for this “fair haven;” but of the multitudes that put out, how few do arrive there! A man may set out by a glorious profession with much resolution, and continue long therein; he may offer very fair for it, and not be far from the kingdom of God; and yet not be able to enter at the last; Matth. vii. 22. Yea, and many of those who are sincere in their profession, and do arrive at last, yet come to heaven, as I may say, by the gates of hell; and put in, as a poor weather-beaten vessel comes into the harbor, more like a wreck than a ship, neither mast nor sail left. The righteous themselves are scarcely saved, that is they are saved with very much difficulty. They have not all an “abundant entrance.”

Some persons are afar off, touched with no care of religion; some come near, but never enter, as semi-converts; others enter, but with great difficulty, they are saved as by fire. But then there are some who go in with full sail before the wind, and have an abundant entrance; they go triumphing out of the world. Ah!

when we come into the narrow channel, at the very point of entrance into life, the soul is then in the most serious frame : all things look with a new face ; conscience scans our evidences most critically ; then also Satan falls upon us, and makes his sorest assaults and batteries. It is the last encounter ; if they escape him now, they are gone out of his reach for ever ; and if he cannot hinder their salvation, yet if he can but cloud their evening, and make them go groaning out of the world, he reaches another end by it, even to confirm and prejudice the wicked, and weaken the hands of others who are looking towards religion.

Reflection.—If this be so, how inevitable is my perdition ! may the careless soul say. If they who strive so much and go so far, yet perish at last, and if the righteous themselves are scarcely saved, then where shall such an ungodly creature as I appear ? O Lord, if they who have made religion their business, and have been many years pursuing a work of mortification, have gone mourning after the Lord Jesus, and walked humbly with God ; yet if some of these have such a hard struggle at last, then what will become of such a vain, sensual, careless, flesh-pleasing wretch as I have been ?

Again ; do saints find it so strait an entrance ? Then, though I have well grounded hopes of safe arrival at last, yet let me look to it, that I do not increase the difficulty. The things that are now done or omitted, are the things that put conscience into such an agony then ; for then it comes to review the life with the most serious eye. O let me not stick my death-bed full of thorns, against I come to lie down upon it. O that I may turn to the wall in that hour, as Hezekiah did, and say, “Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Joy of Sailors on drawing near to Land.

Observation.—WHAT joy is there among seamen, when at last, after a tedious and dangerous voyage, they descrie land, and see the desired haven before them ! Then they turn out of their loathed cabins, and come upon open deck with much joy. “ Then they are glad, because they be quiet : so he bringeth them to their desired haven.” Now they can reflect with comfort upon the many dangers they have past ; it is sweet to recount them.

Application.—But O what a transcendent joy, yea, ravishing, will overrun the hearts of saints when, after so many conflicts, temptations, and afflictions, they arrive in glory, and are harbored in heaven, where they shall rest for ever ! The scripture saith, “ They shall sing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb.” The song of Moses was a triumphant song composed for the celebration of that glorious deliverance at the Red Sea. The saints are now fluctuating upon a troublesome and tempestuous sea ; their hearts sometimes ready to sink, and die within them, at the apprehension of so many and great dangers and difficulties. Many a hard storm they ride out, and many straits and troubles they here encounter with, but at last they arrive at their desired and long-expected haven, and then heaven rings and resounds with their joyful acclamations. And how can it be otherwise, when as soon as ever they set foot upon that glorious shore, Christ himself meets and receives them with a “ Come ye blessed of my Father.” O joyful voice ! O much desired word ! What tribulation would not a man undergo for this word’s sake !

Besides, then they are perfectly freed from all evils, whether of sin or suffering, and perfectly filled with all desired good. Now they shall join with that great assembly, in the high praises of God. O what a day will this be ! If Diagoras died away with an excess of joy, whilst he embraced his three sons that were crowned as victors in the Olympic games in one day ; and good old

Simeon, when he saw Christ in a body subject to the infirmities of our nature, cried out, "Now let thy servant depart in peace;" what unspeakable joy will it be to the saints, to behold Christ in his glory, and see their godly relations also, to whose conversion perhaps they have been instrumental, all crowned, in one day, with everlasting diadems of bliss! and if the stars made a choir, as it were, about that star which appeared at Christ's incarnation, and there is such joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner; no wonder then, the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy, when the general assembly meet in heaven. O how will the arches of heaven ring and echo, when the high praises of God shall be in the mouth of such a congregation! Then shall the saints be joyful in glory, and sing aloud on their beds of everlasting rest.

Reflection.—And is there such a day approaching for the sons of God? and have I authority to call myself one of the number? O then let me not droop at present difficulties, nor hang down my hands when I meet with hardships in the way. O my soul, what a joyful day will this be! At present we are tossed on an ocean of troubles, fears, and temptations; but these tossings will make heaven the sweeter.

Cheer up then, O my soul; thy salvation is now nearer than when thou first believedst, and it will not now be long ere I receive the end of my faith; and then it will be sweet to reflect even upon these hardships in the way. Yet a few days more, and then comes that blessed day thou hast so long waited and panted for. Oppose the glory of that day, O my soul, to thy present sufferings, as blessed Paul did, Rom. i. 18; and thou shalt see how it will shrink them all up to nothing. Oppose the inheritance thou shalt receive in that day, to thy losses for Christ now; and see how joyfully it will make thee bear them; Heb. x. 34. Oppose the honor that will be put upon thee in that day, to thy present reproaches, and see how easy it will make them to thee; I Cor. iv. 5. What condition can I be in, wherein the believing thoughts of this blessed day cannot relieve me? Am I poor? here is that which answers poverty. "Hear-

ken, my beloved brethren ; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" James iii. 5. Am I tempted? here is relief against that. "Now is come salvation and strength ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down," Rev. xii. 16.

Am I deserted? here is a remedy for that too. "And there shall be no night there," Rev. xxii. 5. Come, then, my soul, let us enter upon our inheritance by degrees, and begin the life of heaven upon earth.

THE CAUSES AND CURE OF MENTAL ERRORS.

ABRIDGED BY THE REV. C. BRADLEY.

INTRODUCTION.

An error is a departure or deviation in our opinions or judgments from the perfect rule of the divine law; and to this, all men, by nature, are not only liable, but inclined. Indeed man, by nature, can do nothing else but err. "He goeth astray as soon as he is born;" he makes not one true step till renewed by grace, and many false ones after his renovation. The life of the holiest man is a book with many errata; but the whole edition of a wicked man's life is but one continued error. He who thinks he cannot err, manifestly errs in so thinking. A good man may err, but is willing to know his error; and will not obstinately maintain it, when he once plainly discerns it.

The word of God is our rule, and must therefore be the only test and touchstone to try and discover errors. It is not enough to convince a man of error, that his judgment differs from other men's; you must bring it to the word, and try how it agrees or disagrees therewith; else he that charges another with error, may be found in as great an error himself. None are more disposed easily to receive and tenaciously to defend errors, than those who are the heads or leaders of erroneous sects; especially after they have fought in the defence of bad causes, and deeply engaged their reputation.

The following discourse may be called, "A Blow at the Root." And though you will here find the roots of many errors laid bare and open, which comparatively are of far different degrees of danger and malignity, yet I am far from censuring them alike; nor would I have any that are concerned in lesser errors to be exasperated, because their lesser mistakes are mentioned with greater and more pernicious ones. This candor I not only intent, but justly challenge from my reader.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE RISE AND INCREASE OF ERRORS.

Observation 1.—Truth is the proper object, the natural and pleasant food, of the understanding.

KNOWLEDGE is the assimilation of the understanding to the truths received by it. Nothing is more natural to man, than a desire to know. Knowledge never clogs the mind, as food does the natural appetite; but as the one increases, the other is proportionably sharpened. The minds of all who are not wholly immersed in sensuality, spend their strength in the laborious search and pursuit of truth; sometimes climbing up from the effects to the causes, and then descending again from the causes to the effects. Fervent prayer, sedulous study, fixed meditation, are the labors of inquisitive souls after truth. All the objections and counter-arguments the mind meets in its way, are but the pauses and hesitations of an inquiring soul, not able to determine whether truth lies on this side or on that.

Answerable to the sharpness of the mind's appetite, is the pleasure and delight it feels in the discovery and acquisition of truth. When it has racked and tortured itself on knotty problems, and at last discovered the truth it sought for, with what joy does the soul dilate itself, and run, as it were, with open arms, to clasp and welcome it!

The understanding of man, at first, was perspicacious and clear. All truths lay obvious in their comely order and beauty before it. "God made man upright," Eccl. vii. 29. This rectitude of his mind consisted in light and knowledge, as appears by the prescribed method of his recovery; "Renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Col. iii. 10. Truth in the mind, or the mind's union with truth, being part of the divine image in man, discovers to us the sin and mischief of error, which is a defacing, so far as it prevails, of the image of God.

No sooner was man created, but by the exercise of knowledge he soon discovered God's image in him; and by his ambition after more, lost what he had. So that now there is a cloud spread over truth by ignorance and error, the sad effects of the fall.

Observation 2.—*Of knowledge there are divers sorts and kinds.*

Some knowledge is human and some divine; some speculative and some practical; some ingrafted as the notions of morality, and some acquired by painful search and study: but of all knowledge, there is none like that divine and supernatural knowledge of saving truths revealed by Christ in the scriptures. Hence arises the different degrees both of the sinfulness and danger of errors, those errors being always the worst, which are committed against the most important truths revealed in the gospel.

These truths lie enfolded either in the plain words, or, in evident and necessary consequences from the words, of the Holy Scripture. Scripture consequences are of great use for the refutation of errors. It was by a scripture consequence that Christ successfully proved the resurrection against the Sadducees, Mat. xxii. 31.

Some think that reason and natural light are abundantly sufficient for the direction of life; but certainly nothing is more necessary to us for that end than the written word; for though the remains of natural light have their place and use in directing us about natural and earthly things, yet they are utterly insufficient to guide

us in spiritual and heavenly things. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "Once were ye darkness; now are ye light in the Lord;" that is, by a beam of heavenly light shining from the Spirit of Christ through the written word, into your minds.

The scriptures of the old and new testament make jointly the solid foundation of a Christian's faith. Hence, in Eph. ii. 20, we are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are bound therefore to honor old testament scriptures as well as new, they being part of the divine canon; and must not scruple to admit them as sufficient and authentic proofs for the confirmation of truths, and refutation of errors. Christ referred the people to them, John v. 39; and Paul preached and disputed from them, Acts xxvi. 22.

Observation 3.—To the attainment of divine knowledge from the scriptures, some things are naturally, yet less principally requisite; and some things absolutely and principally necessary.

The natural qualifications desirable in the subject are clearness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, and fidelity of memory. These are desirable requisites to make the understanding susceptible of knowledge. But the irradiation of the mind, by the Spirit of God, is principally necessary. "He shall guide you into all truth."

When this spiritual light shines upon a mind, naturally enriched and qualified with the three fore-mentioned requisites, that mind excels others in the riches of knowledge. And yet the teaching of the Spirit very much supplies and recompenses the defects and weaknesses of these qualifications. Whence two things are remarkable: first, that men of great abilities, clear apprehensions, strong judgments, and tenacious memories, do not only frequently fall into gross errors and damnable heresies themselves, but become heresiarchs, or heads of erroneous factions, drawing multitudes into the same sin and misery with themselves. And, secondly, it is no less remarkable, that men of weaker parts, through the sanctification and direction of the Spirit, for which they have humbly

waited at his feet in prayer, have not only been directed and guided by him into the truth, but so confirmed and fixed therein, that they have been kept sound in their judgments in times of abounding errors; and firm in their adherence to it in days of fiercest persecution.

Observation 4.—Among the many impediments to the obtaining of true knowledge, and the settling of the mind in the truth and faith of the gospel, these three things are of special importance—ignorance, curiosity, and error.

Ignorance slighteth it, or despairs of attaining it. Truth falls into contempt among the ignorant, from sluggishness and apprehension of the difficulties that lie in the way to it. "Wisdom is too high for a fool." Curiosity runs beside or beyond it. This pride and wantonness of the mind puffeth it up with a vain conceit, that it is not only able to penetrate the deepest mysteries revealed in the scriptures, but even unrevealed secrets also. "Intruding into those things which he hath not seen; vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." But error militates directly against truth, contradicts and opposes it, especially when an error is maintained by pride against inward convictions, or means of better information. It is bad to maintain an error for want of light, but abundantly worse to maintain it against light.

Observation 5.—Error is binding on the conscience as well as truth; and altogether as much, and sometimes more influential on the affections.

It presents not itself to the soul in its own name and nature as error; but in the name and dress of truth, and under that notion binds the conscience, and vigorously influences the affections; and then being more indulgent to lust than truth is, it is so much the more embraced by the deceived soul; Acts xxii. 4. The heat that error puts the soul into differs from religious zeal, as a feverish does from a natural heat; which is not indeed so benign and agreeable, but much more fervent and scorching. A

mind under the power of error is restless and impatient to propagate its errors to others, and these heats prey upon and consume the vital spirits and powers of religion.

Observation 6.—*It is exceedingly difficult to get out error, when once it is imbibed, and has rooted itself by an open profession.*

Errors, like some sorts of weeds, having once seeded in a field or garden, it is scarcely possible to subdue and destroy them; especially if they are hereditary errors, or have grown up with us from our youth. It is a great advantage to truth or error to have an early and long possession of the mind. The Pharisees held many erroneous opinions about the law, as appears by their corrupt commentaries on it, refuted by Christ; but did he root them out of their heads and hearts? No; they sooner sent him out of the world. The Sadducees held a most dangerous error about the resurrection; Christ disputed with them to the admiration of others, and proved the resurrection clearly against them; and yet we find the error remaining long after Christ's death; 2 Tim. ii. 18. The apostles themselves had their minds tinctured with this error, that Christ should be outwardly great and magnificent in the world, and raise his followers to great honors and preferments amongst men. Christ plainly told them it was their mistake and error; for "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" yet this did not rid their minds of the error; it stuck fast in them, even till his ascension to heaven. O how hard is it to clear the heart of a good man once leavened with error! and much more hard to separate it from a wicked man!

Some indeed have recovered the soundness of their judgments after deep corruptions by dangerous errors; and yet multitudes hold them fast even to death, and nothing but the fire can reveal their work, and discover what is gold and what is straw and stubble.

Observation 7.—*Men are not so circumspect and jealous of the corruption of their minds by errors, as*

they are of their bodies in times of contagion, or of their lives with respect to gross immoralities.

Spiritual dangers affect us less than corporal, and intellectual evils less than moral. Whether this is the effect of hypocrisy, the errors of the mind being more secret and invisible than those of the conversation, God only knows; man cannot positively determine. Or it may be the effect of ignorance. Men think there is less sin and danger in the one, than in the other; not considering that an apoplexy seizing the head, is every way as mortal as a sword piercing the body. The apostle, in 2 Pet. ii. 1, speaks of damnable heresies, or heresies of destruction. An error in the mind may be as damning and destructive to the soul, as an error of immorality or profaneness in the life. Or it may come to pass from some remains of fear and tenderness in the conscience, which forbid then to carry their erroneous principles into practice; there lying under many confident errors in the mind, a secret jealousy, which will not suffer them to act to the full height of their professed opinions. Yet this falls out but rarely in the world; for loose principles naturally run into loose practices; and the errors of the head into the immoralities of life.

Observation 8.—*It is a great judgment to be given over to an erroneous mind.*

The understanding being the leading faculty, as that guides, the other powers and affections of the soul follow. Now how sad and dangerous a thing is it, for Satan to guide that which is to guide the life of man! That is a dreadful, spiritual, judicial stroke of God which we read of in Rom. i. 26; God suffered them to run into the dregs of immorality and pollutions of life, because they abused their light, and became vain in their imaginations.

Wild fancies in the head usually mislead men into the mire of profaneness, and then God generally sets some visible mark of his displeasure upon them. It were easy to mention a multitude whom the visible hand of God has marked for a warning to others; but usually the spiritual

errors of the mind are followed with a consumption and decay of religion in the soul. If grace be in the heart where error sways its sceptre in the head, yet usually it languishes there and withers. Men may think themselves to be more spiritual, because more airy and notional; but if they would judge themselves impartially, they would certainly find that the seeds of grace thrive not in the heart, when shaded by an erroneous head.

Observation 9.—*It is a pernicious evil, to advance a mere opinion into the place and seat of an article of faith; and to lay as great a stress upon it, as ought to be laid upon the most clear and fundamental point; to be as much concerned for a tile upon the roof, as for the corner-stone which unites the walls and sustains the building.*

Opinion is but reason's projector, and the spy of truth. It makes, in its fullest discovery, no more than the dawning and twilight of knowledge. And yet I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, that this idol of the mind maintains such a sway and empire over all we hold, as if it were all the day we had. Matters of mere opinion are cried up for mathematical demonstrations, and articles of faith written with a sun-beam. Men worship the fancies and creatures of their own minds, more than God; and put more trust in their ill founded opinions, than in the surer word of prophecy; like the humorist who would not trust day-light, but kept his candle still burning by him; "Because," said he, "this is not subject to eclipses, as the sun is."

And what more frequent, when controversies grow fervent, than for those who maintain the error, to boast every silly argument to be a demonstration; to upbraid and pity the blindness and dulness of their opposers, as men that shut their eyes against sun-beams; yea, sometimes, to draw their presumptuous censures through the very hearts of their opposers, and to insinuate, that they must needs hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, sin against their knowledge, and that nothing keeps them

from coming over to them, but pride, shame, or some worldly interest? What a complicated evil is here! Here is a proud exalting of our own opinions, and an immodest imposing on the minds of others, and a dangerous usurpation of God's prerogative in judging the hearts and ends of our brethren.

Observation 10.—*Error being conscious to itself of its own weakness and the strong assaults that will be made upon it, always labors to defend and secure itself under the wings of antiquity, reason, scripture, and high pretensions to reformation and piety.*

Antiquity is a venerable word, but it is ill used when made a cloak for error. Truth must needs be older than error; as the rule must necessarily be before the aberration from it. The grey hairs of opinions are then only beauty and a crown, when found in the way of righteousness. Copper will never become gold by age. A lie will be a lie, let it be ever so ancient. We dispute not by years, but by reasons drawn from scripture. That which is now called an ancient opinion; if it be not a true opinion, was once but a new error. When you can tell us how many years are required to turn an error into truth, then we will give more heed to antiquity when pressed into the service of error, than we now think due to it.

If antiquity will not do, reason is pressed to serve error's turn; and indeed the pencil of reason can lay curious colors upon rotten timber, and varnish over erroneous principles with fair and plausible pretences. What expert artists have the Socinians proved themselves in this matter! But because men are bound to submit human authority and reason to divine revelation, both must give way to the written Word.

Hence it comes to pass, that the great patrons of error, labor above all things to gain countenance to their errors from the written word; and, to this end, they manifestly wrest and rack the scriptures to make them subservient to their opinions; not impartially studying the scriptures first and forming their notions and opinions according to them, but they bring their erroneous opinions to the scriptures, and then, with all imaginable art and sophistry,

wire-draw and force the scriptures to countenance and legitimate their opinions.

But because pretences of piety and reformation are the strokes that give life to the face of this idol, and give it the nearest resemblance to truth, these therefore never fail to be made use of, and zealously professed in the favor of error, though there is often little of either to be found in its advocates, and nothing at all in the doctrines that lay claim to it.

Observation 11.—God, in his tender care for his church and truth, has still in all ages qualified his servants for the defence of his precious truth, against the errors and heresies that have successively assaulted it.

As Providence is observed in every climate and island of the world to have provided antidotes against the poisonous plants and animals of the country, and the one is never far from the other; so is the care of Providence much more conspicuous in the case now before us. When or wheresoever errors and heresies arise, God has his servants at hand with antidotes against them.

When Arius, that cunning and deadly enemy to the Deity of Christ, struck at the very heart of our religion, faith, and comfort—a man of subtle parts and blameless life, which made his heresy so much the more taking—the Lord had his well-furnished Athanasius ready to resist and confound him. And as he had his Athanasius to defend the Deity of Christ, so he wanted not his Basil to defend the doctrine of the Holy Spirit against Macedonius.

From the first rise of popery, we have a large catalogue of the learned and famous witnesses, who, in all ages, have faithfully resisted and opposed it; and when, notwithstanding all, it had overrun Europe like a rapid torrent, or rather inundation of the ocean, and Germany was brought to that condition, that if the Pope had but commanded it, they would have eaten grass or hay, then did the Lord bring forth invincible Luther, and with him a troop of learned champions, into the field.

Thus the care of Providence has been as much displayed in protecting the church against the dangers that have arisen from false brethren within it, as from avowed,

persecuting enemies without it; and had it not been so, the rank weeds of heresies and errors had long since choaked the corn, and made the church a barren field.

Observation 12.—*The want of a modest suspicion and just reflection, gives both confidence and growth to erroneous opinions.*

It is confessed, that all truths are not matters of mere opinion; and yet it is as true, that matters of opinion ought carefully to be sorted from matters of faith, and to be kept in their own rank and class. The former, matters of mere opinion, we are so to hold, as on clearer light to be ready to part with them, and give them up into the hands of truth; the other, matters of faith, we are to hold with resolution to live and die by them.

What is opinion, but the wavering of the understanding betwixt probable arguments for and against a point of doctrine? In such cases, there should be a due concession and allowance to other men's opinions. They offer as fair for the truth as we; and haply their parts, helps, and industry, are not inferior to ours; and we may discern in them as much tenderness of conscience and fear of sin, as in ourselves. In this case, a little more modest suspicion in our opinions, would do the church great service; and that which should prevail with all modest persons to exercise it, is the just reflection they may make upon their own former mistakes.

Observation 13.—*There is a remarkable concatenation of errors, one linking in and drawing another after it.*

Amongst all erroneous sects there is still some leading error for the sake of which the war against truth is commenced; and the other lesser errors are brought forward for the sake and service of this leading darling error. Men are forced to entertain many errors, which they have no great kindness for, in defence of some great leading opinion they have espoused.

Observation 14.—*Errors abound most and spring most quickly in the times of peace, liberty, and outward prosperity, under indulgent rulers.*

Christian rulers are great mercies and blessings to the church. Such as rule over men in the fear of God, are to the church, as well as to the civil state, “ like the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain,” 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

But this, as well as every other mercy, is liable to abuse; and under the influence of indulgent governors, error, as well as truth, springs up, flowers, and seeds. Persecution gives check to the wantonness of men’s opinions, and finds them other and better work to do. Caterpillars and locusts are swept away by the bitter east winds, but swarm in halcyon days, and fall upon every green thing. So that the church rides more safely in the stormy sea, than in the calm harbor. Peace and prosperity are apt to cast its watchmen into a sleep; and whilst they sleep, the envious one sows tares.

Observation 15.—*Errors, in their tender bud and first springing, are shy and modest, in comparison with what they prove afterwards, when they have spread and rooted themselves in the minds of multitudes, and when their authors think it time to raise themselves in the world.*

They usually begin in modest scruples, conscientious doubts and queries. But having once obtained abettors, and, amongst them, some that have ability to plead their cause, they glory in their number, piety, and ability of their party; and boast in the victories they have achieved over their opposers. The mask drops off the face of error, and it appears with a brow of brass, becomes insolent and turbulent both in church and state.

Should a man hear the sermons or private discourses of such men, whilst the design is but forming and projecting, he would meet with little to raise his jealousy.

They speak in general, and guard their discourses with political reserves. Hence the apostle says, "they shall privily, or covertly, bring in damnable heresies."

Observation 16.—*Nothing gives more countenance and increase to error, than a weak or feeble defence of the truth against it.*

The strength of error lies much in the weakness of the advocates and defenders of truth. Every friend of truth is not fit to make a champion for it. Many love it, and pray for it, who cannot defend it. "I can die for the truth," said the martyr, "but I cannot dispute for it." He is a rare as well as a happy disputant, who can clear and carry every point of truth, of which he undertakes the defense. It were happy for the church, if the abilities and prudence of all her friends were equal to their love and zeal. Every little foil, every weak or impudent answer, of a friend to truth, is quickly turned into a weapon to wound it the deeper.

Observation 17.—*Errors of judgment are not cured, by compulsion and external force, but by rational conviction and proper spiritual remedies.*

Bodily sufferings spread rather than cure intellectual errors. I deny not but that fundamental heresies, breaking forth into open blasphemies against God and seditions in the civil state, ought to be restrained. It is no way fit that men should be permitted to go up and down the world with the plague upon them. Nor do I understand why men should be more cautious to preserve their bodies than their souls. But I speak here of such errors as may consist with the foundations of the Christian faith, and are not destructive of civil government. They take the ready way to spread and perpetuate them, who think to root them out of the world by such improper and unwarrantable means as external force and violence. The wind never causes an earthquake, till it be pent in and restrained from motion.

It was a rational and proper question, long since asked.

by Lactantius, “Who can force me to believe what I will not, or not to believe what I will?” The rational and gentle spirit of the gospel is the only proper and effectual method to cure the diseases of the mind.

Observation 18.—*Erroneous doctrines, producing divisions and fierce contentions amongst Christians, prove a fatal stumbling-block to the world, fix their prejudices, and obstruct their conversion to Christ.*

They dissolve the lovely union of the saints, and thereby deter the world from coming into the church. This is evidently implied in the prayer of Christ, that all his people might be one, in order that the world might believe that the Father had sent him. There is indeed no just cause for any to take offence at the Christian religion, because so many errors and heresies spring up among the professors of it, and divide them into so many sects and parties; for in all this we find no more than what was predicted from the beginning; “I hear there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it: for there must be also heresies among you,” 1 Cor. xi. 18. “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them,” Acts xx. 30.

The very same things strongly confirm the Christian religion, which wicked men improve to the reproach and prejudice of it. These things destroy not the credibility of the Christian religion, but increase and confirm it, by evidencing to the world the truth and certainty of Christ’s predictions, which were quite beyond all human foresight, that as soon as his doctrine should be propagated and a church raised by it, errors and heresies should spring up among his disciples, for the trial of their faith and constancy.

Nevertheless this in no degree excuses the sinfulness of errors and divisions in the church. Christ’s prediction neither infuses nor excuses the evil predicted by him: for what he elsewhere speaks of scandals is as true in this case of errors; “These things must come to pass; but woe to that man by whom they come.”

Observation 19.—How specious soever the pretences of error may be, and how long soever they may maintain themselves in esteem among men, they are sure to end in the loss and shame of their authors and abettors at last.

Truth is a rock that the waves of error dash against, and then they evermore return in froth and foam; yea, they “foam out their own shame,” Jude 13. What Tacitus spake of crafty counsels may be truly applied to crafty errors; “They are pleasant in their beginning, difficult in their management, and sad in their event and issue.”

Suppose a man have union with Christ, yet his errors are but as so much hay, wood, straw, stubble, built, or rather endeavoured to be built, upon a foundation of gold. These the fiery trial burns up; the author of them suffers loss; and though himself may be saved, yet so as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 12; he makes a narrow escape. As a man that leaps out of a house on fire from a window or battlement, with great difficulty saves his life; just so errorists will be glad to quit their erroneous opinions which they have taken so much pains to build and draw others into: and then what a shame must it be for a good man to think, How many days and nights have I worse than wasted to defend and propagate an error, which might have been employed in a closer study of Christ, and mine own heart!

Besides, what shame and trouble must it be to the zealous promoters of errors, not only to cast away so vainly and unprofitably their own time and strength, but also to ensnare and allure the souls of others into the same or worse mischief; for though God may save and recover them, those who have been misled by them may perish.

Observation 20.—If errors are ever cured, and the peace and unity of the church established, men must be convinced of and acquainted with the occasions and causes both within and without themselves, whence Div.

their errors proceed; and must both know and apply the proper rules and remedies for the prevention or cure of them.

There is much difference betwixt an occasion and a cause; these are carefully to be distinguished. The most excellent and innocent things, such as the scriptures of truth, the liberty of Christians, the tranquillity and peace of the church, may, by the subtlety of Satan working in conjunction with the corruptions of men's hearts, become the occasions, but can never be the proper culpable causes, of errors.

The holy God, who is a God of truth, Deut. xxxii. 4; and hates errors, Rev. ii. 6; the God of order, and hates confusions and schisms in his church, 1 Cor. xiv. 33; is yet pleased to permit errors and heresies to arise. And this he does for the trial of his people's faith and constancy, and for a spiritual punishment on some men for the abuse of his known truths; and by the permission of these evils, he advances his own glory, and the good of his church and people. Augustine answers the question, *Why does not God, since he hates errors, sweep them out of the world?* "Because," says he, "it is an act of greater power to bring good out of evil, than not to suffer evils to be at all."

But though heresies and errors must break forth in the world, and God will turn them eventually to his own glory and the benefit of his church; yet it is a dreadful judgment to be delivered over to a spirit of error, to be the authors and abettors of them. This is a judicial stroke of God, and as ever we hope to escape it, let us carefully shun the three following causes and provocations thereof—

1. Want of love to the truth, which God has made to shine about us in the means, or into us by actual illumination under the means of knowledge. "Because they received not the love of the truth, God gave them up to strong delusions," 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. They are justly plagued with error, who slight truth. False doctrines are fit plagues for false hearts.

2. Beware of pride and wantonness of mind. It is

not so much the weakness, as the wantonness of the mind, which provokes God to inflict this judgment. None likelier to make seducers than boasters, Jude 16. Arius gloried, that God had revealed some things to him which were hidden from the apostles themelves. Simon Magus boasted himself to be the mighty power of God. The erroneous Pharisees loved the praises of men. When the Papist reproached Luther that he desired to have his disciples called Lutherans, he replied, "I disdain that the children of Christ should be called by so vile a name as mine."

3. Beware that you neglect not prayer to be kept sound in your judgments, and guided by the Spirit into all truth. "With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander, or err, from thy commandments." This do, and you are safe from such a judicial tradition.

THE CAUSES OF ERROR.

The First Cause of Error.

We shall next speak of the causes of error, and amongst these is found, a perverse wrangling humor at the pretended obscurity of the scriptures. We acknowledge that there are in the scriptures, some things hard to be understood, the sublime and mysterious nature of the matter rendering them so; and some things hard to be interpreted, from the manner of expression, such as prophecies. The Spirit of God thus designedly casts a veil over them, till the proper season of their revelation and accomplishment be come. Besides, in St. Paul's style, there are found some peculiar words and forms of speech, of which ordinary rules of grammar take no notice, nor give any parallel examples of; as "to be buried with Christ;" "to be baptised into his death." There are also multitudes of words found in scripture, of various and vastly different significations; and accordingly there is a diversity, and sometimes a contrariety of senses, given of them by expositors.

But notwithstanding all this, the great and necessary

things to our salvation are so perspicuously and plainly revealed in the scriptures, that even babes in Christ apprehend and understand them. And though there are difficulties in other points more remote from the foundation, yet the Spirit of God is not to be accused, but rather his wisdom to be admired herein; for this serves to excite our most intense study and diligence, which, by this difficulty is made necessary. The very prophets, yea, the very angels search into these things.

Remedies.

The proper remedies and preventives in this case, are a heedful attendance to and practice of these rules.

Rule 1.—Let all obscure and difficult texts of scripture be constantly examined and expounded according to the analogy or proportion of faith, which is St. Paul's own rule, “Let him that prophesieth,” that is, expoundeth the scriptures in the church, “do it according to the proportion of faith.” Rom. xii. 6. The analogy or proportion of faith, is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the scriptures of the old and new testament, as the rule of our faith and obedience. Whilst we carefully and sincerely attend hereunto, we are secured from sinfully corrupting the word of God. Admit of no sense which interferes with this proportion of faith. If men have no regard to this, but take liberty to rend off a single text from the body of truth to which it belongs, and put a peculiar interpretation upon it, which is discordant to other scriptures, what woful work will they quickly make! Give but a man liberty to take this text, out of the frame of scripture, “A man is justified by works, and not by faith only;” and expound it without regard to the tenor of the gospel doctrine of justification in Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and a gross error starts up immediately. Give but another man the like liberty to practise upon John xiv. 28, and a gross heresy will presently look with an orthodox face.

Rule 2.—Never put a new sense upon words of scripture, in favor of your preconceived notions and opinions, nor wrest it from its general and common use and sense.

This is not to interpret, but to rack the scriptures. We are not to make the scripture speak what we think, but what the prophet or apostle thought, whom we interpret.

Rule 3.—Whenever you meet with an obscure place of scripture, let the context of that scripture be diligently and thoroughly searched; for it is usual with God to set up some light there, to guide us through the obscurity of a particular text. There is much truth in the observation of one of the Rabbins, “There is no scruple or objection in the law, but it has a solution at the side of it.”

Rule 4.—Let one testament freely cast its light upon the other; and let not men undervalue or reject an old testament text, as no way useful to clear and establish a new testament point of faith or duty. Each testament reflects light upon the other. The Jews reject the new testament, and many among us sinfully slight the old; but without the help of both, we can never understand the mind of God in either.

Rule 5.—Have a due regard to that interpretation of obscure places of scripture, which has not only the current sense of learned expositors, but also naturally agrees with the scope of the place.

The Second Cause of Error.

A second evil temper, disposing and inclining men to receive erroneous doctrines and opinions, is the abuse of that just and due Christian liberty allowed by Christ to all his people, to read, examine, and judge of the sense of scriptures.

The exercise of this liberty, is a duty commanded by Christ, and commended in scripture. “Search the scriptures.” “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.” And the exercise of this private judgment of discretion by the people, is highly commended by St. Paul in the Bereans; “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so,” Acta xvii. 11. This liberty is not allowed in that latitude in any religion, as it is in the Christian religion; nor enjoyed in its fulness, as it is in the reformed

ed religion ; the glory of which is, that it allows its principles and doctrines to be critically examined and tried by all men, as well-knowing that the more it is sifted and searched by its professors, the more they will be confirmed and satisfied in the truth of it.

But yet this gracious and just liberty of Christians suffers a double abuse ; one from the Papists, who injuriously restrain and deny it to the people ; another by Protestants themselves, who sinfully stretch and extend it beyond the just degree and measure in which Christ allows it to them. It is too frequently abused, by stretching it beyond Christ's allowance, when every ignorant and confident person, under pretence of liberty granted by Christ, rudely breaks in upon the sacred text, distorts, violates, and abuses the scriptures at pleasure, by putting such strange and foreign senses on them, as the Spirit of God never meant or intended.

Remedies.

The proper way to prevent and remedy this mischief, is not by depriving any man of his just liberty either to read or judge for himself what God speaks in his word ; that were the same thing as to cut off the head to cure a head-ach ; but the proper course of preventing the mischief, is by laboring to confine Christians within those limits which Christ himself has set to this liberty which he has granted them. And these are such as follow—

Limitation 1.—Though Christ has indulged to the meanest and weakest Christian, a liberty to read and judge of the scriptures for himself, yet he has neither thereby nor therewith granted him a liberty publicly to expound and preach the word to others : that is quite another thing.

Every man who can read the scriptures and judge of their sense, is not thereby made Christ's officer, publicly and authoritatively to preach and inculcate the same to others. Two things are requisite to such an employment, proper qualifications, 2 Tim. iii; and a solemn call or designation, Rom. x. 14, 15. The ministry is a distinct office, Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Thess. v. 12; and

none but qualified and ordained persons can authoritatively preach the word, 2 Tim. i. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22.

Christians may privately edify one another by reading the scriptures, admonishing, counselling, reproofing one another in a private fraternal way, at seasons wherein they interfere not with more public duties; but for every one who has confidence enough (and the ignorant are usually best stocked with confidence) to assume a liberty without due qualification or call to expound and give the sense of scripture, and pour forth his crude and unstudied notions, as the pure sense and meaning of God's Spirit in the scriptures; this is what Christ never allowed, and through this flood-gate errors have broken in, and overflowed the church of God.

Limitation 2.—Though there is no part of scripture shut up from the knowledge or use of any Christian, yet Jesus Christ has recommended to Christians of different abilities, the study of some parts of scripture rather than others, as more proper and agreeable to their age and stature in religion.

Christians are by the apostle ranked into three classes; fathers; young men, and little children; and accordingly the wisdom of Christ has directed to that sort of food which is proper for each class. There is in the word all sorts of food suitable to all ages in Christ; there is milk for babes, *and strong meat for grown Christians*: Heb. v. 13. Those who are unskilful in the word of righteousness, should feed upon "milk," that is, the easy, plain, but most nutritive and pleasant, practical doctrines of the gospel. But "strong meat," that is, the more abstruse, deep, and mysterious truths, belongs to them who are of full age, even those "who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil;" that is, truth and error. To the same purpose the apostle speaks in 1 Cor. iii. 2; "I have fed you with milk; and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it."

Art thou a weak unstudied Christian, a babe in Christ? Then the easier and more nutritive milk of plain gospel doctrine is fitter for thee, and will do thee more good,

than the stronger meat of profound and more mysterious points, or the bones of controversy, which are too hard for thee to deal with.

The Third Cause of Error.

There is also another evil disposition, rendering us easily receptive of errors, and that is spiritual slothfulness and carelessness; a want of a due and serious search of the whole scripture, with a sedate and rational consideration of every part and particle therein.

Truth, like rich veins of gold, lies deep. If we will get the treasure, we must not only beg, but dig also. "The talk of the lips tendeth only to poverty." We are not to take up with that which lies uppermost, and next at hand, upon the surface of the text; but to search with the most sedate and considerative mind into all parts of the written word, examining every text which has any respect to the truth we are searching for, heedfully to observe the scope, antecedents, and consequents, and to value every tittle, and iota; for each of these are of divine authority, and sometimes great weight is laid upon a small word, yea upon the addition or change of a letter in a word, as appears in the names Abram and Sarai.

It will require some strength of mind and great diligence to lay all parts of scripture before us, and to compare words with words and things with things, "spiritual things with spiritual." And though it is true that some important doctrines, as that of justification by faith, are methodically disposed, and thoroughly cleared and settled in one and the same context, yet it is as true that very many other points of faith and duty are not so digested, but are delivered here a little, and there a little. You must not think to find all that belongs to one head or point of faith or duty, laid together in a system in scripture, but scattered abroad in several places, some in the old testament, and some in the new, at a great distance from one another.

Now, in our searches and enquiries after the full and satisfying knowledge of the will of God in such points,

it is necessary that the whole word of God be thoroughly searched, and all those parcels brought together to an interview.

If a man, for instance, would see the entire discovery that was made of Christ to the fathers under the old testament, he will not find it laid together in any one prophet; but will find that one speaks to one part of it, and another to another. Moses gives the first general hint of it; "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." But then, if you would know more particularly of whose seed, according to the flesh, he should come, you must turn to Gen. xxii. 18; "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." And if you yet doubt what seed God means there, you must go to the apostle, Gal. iii. 16; "To thy seed, which is Christ." If you would further know the place of his nativity, the prophet Micah must inform you that it should be Bethlehem Ephrata. If you enquire of the quality of his parent, another prophet gives you that; "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel," Isa. vii. 14. If the time of his birth be inquired after, Moses and Daniel must inform you of that, Gen. xlvi. 10; Dan. iv. 24.

So under the new testament, if a man enquire about the change of the sabbath, he must not expect to find a formal repeal of the seventh day, and an express institution of the first day in its room; but he is to consider, *first*, what the evangelist speaks, Mark ii. 28, that Christ is Lord of the sabbath, and so had power not only to dispense with it, but to change it—*secondly*, that on the first day of the week Christ rose from the dead, and that this is that great day, foretold to be the day to be solemnized on that account; Psal. cxviii. 24—*thirdly*, that accordingly the first day of the week is emphatically styled the Lord's day, Rev. i. 10. where you find his own name written upon it—*fourthly*, you will find this was the day on which the apostles and primitive Christians assembled together for the stated and solemn performance of public worship, John xx. 19, and other public church-acts and duties, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. And so by putting together, and considering all these particulars,

we draw a just conclusion, that it is the will of God, that since the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week should be observed as the Christian-sabbath.

Remedies.

To cure our spiritual sluggishness, and awaken us to the most serious and diligent search after the will of God, that we may not neglect the smallest hint given us about it, the following considerations will be found of great use and weight—

Consideration 1.—The most sedate, impartial, and diligent inquiries after the will of God revealed in his word, is a duty expressly enjoined by his sovereign command, which indispensably binds the conscience of every Christian to the practice of it.

“And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,” Rom. xii. 2. Here you find this duty, not only associated with, but made the very end of, our nonconformity to the world, and renovation of our minds, the very things which constitute a Christian. And to sweeten our pains in this work, that will of God, for the discovery whereof we search, is presented to us under three alluring properties—“good, acceptable, and perfect.” Good it must needs be, because the will and essence of God, the chief good, are not two things, but one and the same. And *perfect* it must needs be, because it is the beam and standard by which the actions of all reasonable creatures ought to be weighed and tried as to the moral good and evil of them. And being both good and perfect, how can it be otherwise than highly acceptable and grateful to an upright soul. “*Search the Scriptures,*” says Christ. “*To the law, and to the testimony,*” says the prophet. This is not a matter of mere Christian liberty, but a commanded duty; and at our peril be it, if we neglect it.

Consideration 2.—No act of ours can be good and acceptable to the Lord, further than it is agreeable to his will revealed in the word.

No man can be a rule to himself. He can be no more his own rule than his own end. One man cannot be a rule to another. The best of men, and their actions and examples, are only so far a rule of imitation to us, as they themselves are ruled by the divine revealed will; 1 Cor. xi. 1. Uncommanded acts of worship are abominable to God, and highly dangerous to ourselves; they kindle the fire of his jealousy, to the ruin and destruction of the presumptuous sinner; Lev. x. 1. So that if the beauty and excellency of the will of God be not enough to allure us, the danger of acting without the knowledge of it, may justly terrify us.

Consideration 3.—In this duty we tread in the footsteps of the wisest and holiest men that ever went to heaven before us.

It is not only the characteristic of a good man, Psal. i, 2, but it has been the constant practice of the most eminent believers in all ages. The greatest prophets, who had this advantage of us, that they were the organs or inspired instruments of discovering the will of God to others, did not neglect to search it diligently themselves; 1 Pet. i. 10. Daniel, that great favorite of heaven, who had the visions and revelations of God, yet diligently searched the written word, in order to the discovery of the mind of God; Dan. ix. 2.

Consideration 4.—Every discovery of the will of God by fervent prayer, diligent and impartial search of the scriptures, and all other allowed helps, gives the highest pleasure the mind of man is capable of in this world.

“Thy words were found of me,” says Jeremiah, “and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart,” Jer. xv. 16; as pleasant food to a fainting man; for now conscience is quieted, comforted, and cheered in the way of duty.

Consideration 5.—By this means you will find your faith greatly confirmed in the truth of the scriptures.

The sweet consent and beautiful harmony of all the parts of the written word is a great argument of its divinity; and this you will clearly discern, when by a due search you find things which lie at the remotest distance, conspire and consent in one, and one part casting light

on another, as well as adding strength to it. Thus you will find the new testament veiled in the old, and the old revealed in the new: and that such a consent of things, so distant in time and place, can never be the project and invention of man.

Consideration 6.—The diligent and impartial search and inquiry after the will of God, with no other design than to please him in the whole course of our duties, will turn to us for a testimony of the integrity and sincerity of our hearts.

“Thy word,” said David, “have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” And God will not hide his will from those who thus seek to know it. If men would apply themselves to search the word by frequent prayer and fixed meditation, from so pure a design, not bringing their prejudiced or prepossessed minds to it; the Spirit of the Lord would guide them into all truth, and keep them out of dangerous and destructive errors.

The Fourth Cause of Error.

Besides the slothfulness of the mind, there is found in many persons another evil disposition preparing them easily to receive erroneous impressions—the instability and fickleness of the judgment, and unsettledness of mind about the truth of the gospel.

Of this the apostle warns us in Eph. iv. 14; “That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” None are so constant and steady in the profession of the truth, as those who are fully convinced of and well satisfied with the grounds of it.

He who professes a truth ignorantly, cannot rationally be supposed to adhere to it constantly. He who is but half convinced of a truth, when he engages in the profession of it, must needs be a double-minded man, as the apostle calls him, James i. 8; half the mind hangs one way, and half another, and so it is easily moveable this way or that, with the least breath of temptation. And hence

it comes to pass he is so often at a loss about this duty and practice; for, a doubtful mind must needs make a staggering and uncertain practice.

And this instability of the judgment proceeds either from hypocrisy or weakness. Sometimes it proceeds from hypocrisy. Sometimes instability of the mind is the effect only of weakness in the judgment, proceeding merely from want of age and growth in Christ, not having as yet attained "senses exercised to discern both good and evil," Heb. v. 14. They are but children in Christ, and children are easy and credulous creatures, presently taken with a new toy, and as soon weary of it; such a wavering and unstable temper invites temptation, and falls an easy prey into its hands.

I confess some cases may happen where the pretences on both sides may be so fair, as to put a judicious Christian to a stand what to choose; but then his deliberation will be diligent, and he will not change his opinions every month as sceptics do. Wherever error finds such a mutable disposition, its work is half done before it makes one assault. How many wavering professors at this day lie in temptation's way! and how great a harvest have heretics had among them! There is not a *mountebank* comes upon the stage, but he finds ten times more customers for his drugs than the most learned and experienced physician. The giddy-headed multitude have more regard to novelty than truth.

Remedies.

How necessary and desirable are some effectual rules and remedies in this case! O what a mercy would it be to the professors of these days to have their minds fixed, and their judgments settled in the truths of Christ! Happy is that man whose judgment is so guarded, that no dangerous error or heresy can injure it. To this end I shall here recommend the four following rules—

Rule 1. Look warily to it, that you get a real inward implantation into Christ, and lay the foundation deep and firm in a due and serious deliberation of religion, whenever you engage in the public profession of it.

Of this import are the apostle's words, Col. ii. 6, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught." Fertility and stability in Christ, a pair of inestimable blessings, depend upon a good rooting of the soul in him at first. He who thrusts a dead stick into the ground, may easily pull it up again, but he cannot do so by a well-rooted tree. It was want of a good root, and due depth of earth, which soon turned the green corn into dry stubble, Matth. xiii. 21.

Rule 2. Labor after an inward experimental taste of all those truths which you profess.

This will preserve your minds from wavering and hesitation about the certainty and reality of them. We do not easily part with those truths, which have sensibly shed down their sweet influences upon our hearts; Heb. x. 34. No sophist can easily persuade a man who has tasted the sweetness of honey, that it is a bitter and unpleasant thing.

Rule 3. Be thoroughly sensible of the benefit and good of establishment, and of the evil and danger of a wavering mind and judgment.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established," Heb. xiii. 9. Established souls are the honor of the truth. It was the honor of religion in the primitive days, that when the heathens would proverbially express an impossibility, they used to say, "You may as soon turn a Christian from Christ as do it."

The Fifth Cause of Error.

Another inward cause, disposing men to receive erroneous impressions, is an unreasonable eagerness to snatch at any doctrine or opinion, that promises ease to an anxious conscience.

Men who are under the terrors of conscience are willing to listen to any thing which offers present relief. Of all the troubles in the world, those of the mind and conscience are most intolerable: and those that are in pain are glad of ease, and readily catch at any thing that ~~assumes~~

to offer it. This seems to be the thing which led those poor distressed sinners spoken of in Micah vi. 6, into their gross mistakes and errors about the method of the remission of their sins. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" They were ready to purchase inward peace, and buy out their pardon at any rate. Nothing but the stings of conscience could have extorted these things from them.

Satan, who feels more of a guilty conscience in himself, than any other creature in the world, and knows how ready ignorant and distressed sinners are to catch at any thing that looks like ease or comfort, prepares for them erroneous doctrines and opinions, under the names of anodynes and quieting recipes, by swallowing of which they feel some present ease; but their disease is thereby made so much the more incurable.

To quiet distressed souls, before their alarms of conscience settle into true repentance and faith in the blood of Christ, he dresses up and presents to them such opinions as these—that they may boldly apply to themselves all the promises of pardon and peace, without any respect at all to repentance or faith in themselves—that it is not at all needful, nay, that it is illegal and sinful to have any respect to these things forasmuch as their sins were pardoned and they themselves justified from eternity—that the covenant of grace is in all respects absolute, and is made to sinners as sinners, without any regard to their faith or repentance—and that whatever sins there may be in them, God sees them not.

To such a charm of troubles as this, how earnestly does the ear of a distressed conscience listen! How greedily does it suck in such pleasing words! Are all sins that are pardoned, pardoned before they are committed? and does the covenant of grace require neither repentance nor faith antecedently to the application of the promises? How groundless then are all my fears and troubles!

This, like a dose of opium, quiets, or rather stupifies, the raging conscience; for even an error in judgment, till it is detected and discovered to be such, quiets and comforts the heart as well as principles of truth; but whenever the fallacy shall be detected, whether here or hereafter, the anguish of conscience must be increased, or, (which is worse) left desperate.

Remedies.

To prevent and cure this mistake and error in the soul, by which it is prepared to catch any erroneous principle that is but plausible for its present relief and ease, I shall desire my reader seriously to ponder and consider the following queries on this case—

Query 1. Whether a good trouble be not better than a false peace?

It is sad to lie tossing a few days under a fever; but it is far worse to have that fever turned into a lethargy or fatal apoplexy. Erroneous principles may rid the soul of its present pain and eternal hopes and safety together. Acute pains are better than a senseless stupidity. Though the present rage of conscience be not a right conviction, yet it may lead to it, and terminate in faith and union with Christ at last, if Satan do not quench it before its time.

Query 2. Bethink yourselves seriously, whether troubles so quieted and laid asleep, will not revive and turn again upon you with a double force, as soon as the virtue of the drug, the erroneous principle, has spent itself?

The efficacy of truth is eternal, and will maintain the peace it gives for ever; but all delusions must vanish, and the troubles which they dammed up for a time, will break out with a greater force.

Query 3. Read the scriptures, and enquire, whether God's people, who have lain long under sharp inward terrors, have not at last found peace, by those very methods which the principles that quiet you utterly exclude?

You fetch your peace from a groundless notion, that your sins were pardoned and your persons justified from all

eternity, and therefore you may apply boldly and confidently to yourselves the promises and privileges in the gospel, without any regard to faith or repentance wrought by the Spirit in your souls, but holy David took another course for the settlement of his conscience; Psal. li. 6, 10; and it has been the constant practice of the saints in all ages, to clear their title to the righteousness of Christ wrought without them, by the works of his Spirit wrought within them.

The Sixth Cause of Error.

The next evil temper preparing and disposing the mind for error, is an easy credulity in men, rendering them apt to receive things upon trust from others, without due and thorough examination of the grounds and reasons of them.

This is a disposition fitted to receive any impression seducers please to make upon them. They are said to deceive the hearts of the simple, that is, credulous, but well-meaning people, who suspect no harm. It is said, Prov. xiv. 15, "The simple believeth every word." And how many simple souls are there, who may be said to carry their brains in other men's heads; and like silly sheep, follow the next in the track before them; especially if their leaders have but wit and art enough to hide their errors under specious and plausible pretensions. Multitudes seem to hold their opinions by a hereditary right, as if their faith descended to them in the same way that their estates do. Many honest well-meaning, but weak Christians, are also easily beguiled by specious pretences of new light, and higher attainments in reformation; but what are most of the erroneous opinions now in vogue in the world, but old errors under new names and titles?

Remedies.

The remedies and preventions in this case, are such as follow—*Remedy 1.* It is beneath a man to profess any opinion to be his own, whilst the grounds and reasons

of it are in other men's keeping and wholly unknown to himself.

If he only who leads me into an error were exposed to hazard, and I free, whatever became of him, it were quite another thing; but when our Saviour tells us, that "if the blind lead the blind *both*" that is, the follower as well as the leader, "fall into the ditch;" at my peril be it, if I follow without eyes of my own. We neither ought defy the judgment of the weakest, nor yet, on the other side, to deify the judgment of the strongest Christian. He who pins his faith on another man's sleeve, knows not whither he will carry it.

Remedy 2. As you ought not to abuse your Christian privilege and liberty, to try all things, so neither on the other side to undervalue or part with it. See the things that so much concern your eternal peace with your own eyes.

Remedy 3. Before you adventure to espouse the opinions of others, diligently observe and mark the fruits and consequences of those opinions in the lives of the zealous abettors and propagators of them. "By their fruits," says Christ, "ye shall know them."

When the opinion or doctrine naturally tends to looseness, or when it draws away all a man's zeal to maintain and diffuse it, and practical religion thereby visibly languishes in his conversation, it is time for you to make a pause, before you advance one step farther towards it.

The Seventh Cause of Error.

The next evil disposition that I shall mention, is a vain curiosity, or an itching desire to pry into things unrevealed or, at least, above our ability to search out and discover.

Of this disease the apostle warns us, 2 Tim. iv. 3: "The time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Nothing will please them but new notions, and new modes of language, method, tone, and gesture.

Sound doctrine is the only substantial and solid food

that nourishes and strengthens the heart of the new creature; but vain sceptics nauseate and despise this as trite, vulgar, cheap, and low. Nothing pleases them but novelties and rarities. Hence it is they so boldly intrude into things they have not seen; Col. ii. 18.

Satan is well aware of this propensity in men, and how exceedingly serviceable it is to his design; and therefore having the art of pleasing itching ears with captivating novelties, he never fails to feed their minds with a pleasing variety and fresh succession of them. New opinions are still invented, in which the dangerous hooks of error are hid.

Remedies.

The proper remedies to cure this desire of novelty, or dangerous curiosity of the mind, are—

Remedy 1. Due reflection on the manifold mischiefs that have entered the world by this way.

It was this curiosity and desire to know, that overthrew our first parents. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof." In the very same way by which Satan let in the first error, he has let thousands into the world since. Nothing is more common, than for an old error to prevail afresh under the name of new light. Satan has the art of turning stale errors after the mode of the present times, and making them current and passable, as new discoveries, and rare novelties.

Remedy 2. Be satisfied that God has not left his people to seek their salvation or spiritual substance among curious, abstruse, and doubtful notions; but in the great, solid, and plainly revealed truths of the gospel. "This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3.

Remedy 3. Vain curiosity is a dangerous snare of Satan. By it he devours our time, eats up our strength, and diverts our minds from the necessary and most important business of religion. Whilst we immerse our thoughts in these pleasing, but barren contemplations, heart-work,

closet-work, family-work, lie by neglected. Whilst we are employed in garnishing the dish with flowers, and curious figures, the cunning cheat takes away the meat by which our souls should subsist.

The Eighth Cause of Error.

The pride of human reason is another evil disposition, moulding and preparing the mind for errors. When men are once conceited of the strength and perspicacity of their own carnal reason, nothing is more usual than for such men to run mad with reason into a thousand mistakes and errors. To this cause Ecclesiastical historians ascribe the errors which infest the church.

Reason indeed is the highest natural excellency of man; it exalts him above all earthly creatures, and, in its primitive perfection, almost equalized him with angels. The pleasures which result from its exercise, transcend all the delights and pleasures of sense. But how common is it for men to dote upon their own intellectual beauty, and glory in the victories over weaker understandings! And though the reason of fallen men is greatly wounded and weakened by sin, yet it imagines itself to be as strong and clear as ever; and, like Samson when his locks were shorn, goes forth as before time, being neither sensible of its own weakness, nor of the mysterious and unsearchable depths of scripture.

Reason is our arbiter and guide, by the institution and law of nature, in civil and natural affairs. It is the beam and standard by which we weigh them. It is a home-born judge, and king in the soul. Faith comes in as a stranger to nature, and so it is dealt with, even as an intruder into reason's province, just as the Sodomites dealt with Lot. Reason refuses to be an underling to faith.

Out of this arrogancy of carnal reason, Socinianism first started, and has since propagated itself. Yea atheism, as well as Socinianism, are births from this womb. It is proud and carnal reason, which quarrels at the creation of the world, and seems to triumph in its uncontrollable maxim, "Out of nothing, comes nothing." It looks upon the doctrine of the resurrection with a deriding smile, as a

thing incredible. It thinks it hard and harsh, that God should command men to turn themselves to him, and threaten them with damnation, in case of refusal; and yet, at the same time, that man should not have in himself a sufficient power and a free will to do this, without the supernatural and preventing grace of God. O the madness of carnal reason!

Remedies.

To take down the arrogance and prevent the mischief of carnal reasonings, let us be convinced—

Remedy 1. That it is the will of God that reason in all believers should yield to faith, and all ratiocination submit to revelation.

Reason is no better than a usurper, when it presumes to arbitrate matters belonging to faith and revelation. Reason's proper place is to sit at the feet of faith; and instead of searching the secret grounds and reasons, to adore and admire the great and unsearchable mysteries of the gospel. None of God's works are unreasonable, but many of them are above reason. It has been truly said, "Never does reason show itself more reasonable, than when it ceaseth to reason about things that are above reason." "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 20. It is not reason, that must save us, but faith.

Remedy 2. Be convinced of the weakness and deep corruption of natural reason; and this will restrain its arrogance and make it modest and wary.

A convinced and renewed soul is conscious to itself of its own weakness and blindness; and therefore dares not pry audaciously into the secrets of heaven, nor summon the great God to its bar. It finds itself posed by the mysteries of nature, and therefore concludes itself an incompetent judge of the mysteries of faith.

The arrogance of reason is the reigning sin of the unregenerate, though it is a disease with which the regenerate

themselves are infected. When conviction does its work on the soul, the plumes of spiritual pride quickly fall; and it saith with Job, "Once have I spoken, but I will speak no more; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

Remedy 3. Consider the manifold mischiefs and evils flowing from the pride of reason.

It not only fills the world with errors and distractions, but it also invades the rights of heaven, and casts a vile reflection upon the wisdom, sovereignty, and veracity of God. It lifts up itself against his wisdom, not considering that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." It spurns at his glorious sovereignty, not considering that "he giveth no account of his matters." It questions his veracity, in saying with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?"

The Ninth Cause of Error.

The last evil disposition I shall here take notice of, is rash and ignorant zeal; a temper preparing the mind both to propagate furiously and receive easily erroneous doctrines and opinions.

When there is in the soul more heat than light, when a fervent spirit is governed by a weak head, such a temper Satan desires and singles out as fittest for his purpose, especially when the heart is graceless as well as the understanding weak. A blind horse of a high mettle will carry the rider into any pit, and venture over the most dangerous precipices.

Blind zeal is a sword in a madman's hand. No persecutor like a conscientious one, whose erroneous conscience offers up the blood of the saints to the glory of God; John xvi. 2. The blind but zealous Pharisees would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. Of the same temper were the false teachers alluded to by the apostle in Gal. iv. 17. "They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you" from our society and ordinances, "that you might affect them."

And as it is the great instrument by which Satan propagates errors, so it produces in the souls of the people a state of mind adapted to receive them; for by this means

error gains possession of the affections, without passing the previous test of the understanding, and thus gains the soul by the advantage of a surprize. Everything, by how much the more weak and ignoble it is, by so much the more it watches for surprisals and advantages. Error cares not to endure the due examination and test of reason ; and therefore seeks to gain by surprisal what it despairs of ever gaining by a plain and fair trial.

Rabshakeh would not treat with Hezekiah's counsellors of state, but with the common people upon the wall ; and error cares not to treat with sound reason, able to sift it, but with the affections ; as well knowing that it is in vain to make war in reason's territories without first gaining a party among the affections.

Remedies.

The best defences against erroneous contagions, in this case, are to be found in the following particulars—

Defence 1. Reflect seriously on the manifold mischiefs occasioned every where, and in all ages of the world, by rash zeal.

Revolve church-histories and you will find, that scarcely any cruel persecution has flamed in the world, which has not been kindled by blind zeal. Turn over all the records, both of Pagan and Popish persecutions, and you will find these two observations confirmed and verified—that ignorant zeal has kindled the fires of persecution—and that the more zealous any have been for the ways of error and falsehood, the more implacably fierce and cruel they have been to the sincere servants of God. Superstitious zeal draws all the strength and power of the soul into that one design ; and woe to him who stands in the way of such a man, if God interpose not betwixt him and the stroke. It was a rational wish of him who said, God deliver me from a man of one only design.

Now consider, reader, if thy judgment be weak and thy affections warm, how much thou liest exposed, not only to errors which may ruin thyself, but also to persecution, wherein Satau may manage thy zeal for the injury or ruin of those who are better than thyself.

Defence 2. Consider what mischief zeal for an error will do to thine own soul as well as to others.

It will wholly engross thy time, thoughts, and strength; so that if there is any gracious principle in thee, it will not be able to thrive and prosper. As a fever takes off the natural appetite from food, so will erroneous zeal take off thy spiritual appetite from meditation, prayer, heart-examination, and all the most necessary and nourishing duties of religion; and consequently thy grace must languish. When thy soul, with David's, should be filled and feasted as with marrow and fatness, by delightful meditations of God on thy bed, thou wilt be rolling in thy mind thy barren and insipid notions which yield no food or spiritual strength to thy soul. Thou wilt lie musing how to answer the arguments and objections against thine errors, when thou shouldest rather be employed in solving the just and weighty objections that lie against thy sincerity and interest in Christ, which were time far better improved.

Defence 3. Consider how baneful this inordinate zeal has been to Christian society, lamentably defacing, and almost dissolving it everywhere, to the unspeakable detriment of the churches.

We read, Mal. iii. 16, of a blessed time, when they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. O happy time! blessed days! I myself remember the time when the zeal of the saints spent itself in provoking one another to love and good works in joint and fervent prayer, in inward, experimental, and edifying communion. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is cast down within me. For alas! alas! how do I see every where Christian communion turned into vain janglings! Churches and families into mere arenas of contention! Men's conversations falling as naturally into contentions about trifles as they were wont to do into heavenly and experimental subjects, to the unspeakable disgrace and damage of religion.

Defence 4. That opinion is justly to be suspected for erroneous which comes in at the back-door of the af-

fections ; and not openly and fairly at the right gate of an enlightened and well-satisfied judgment. It is a thief that cometh in at the back-door, at least he is strongly to be suspected for one. Truth courts the mistress, makes its first and fairest addresses to the understanding ; error bribes the handmaid, and labors first to win the affections, that by their influence it may corrupt the judgment.

The Tenth Cause of Error.

We come next to consider the principal impulsive cause of errors ; which is Satan, working upon the pre-disposed matter he finds in the corrupt nature of man.

Satan was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. He hates it, and all the children and friends of truth, with deadly hatred. And this hatred he manifests sometimes by raising furious storms of persecution against the sincere professors of it, Rev. iii. 10 ; and sometimes by clouds of heresies and errors with design to darken it. In the former he acts as a roaring lion ; in the latter as a subtle serpent ; "I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 5. And it is worthy of observation, that he introduces multitudes of errors into the world under the unsuspected notions of admirable and approved preservatives from all mischiefs and dangers from himself. Erroneous teachers are the ministers of Satan, however they may transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, and the subtle, dangerous errors they broach, are fitly styled by the Spirit of God, "the depths of Satan."

Now the design of Satan herein is double—he aims, first, at the ruin of those who propagate his errors ; on which account the apostle calls them "destructive" or, as we render it, "damnable heresies :" and because God will preserve the souls of his own from this moral contagion, therefore he endeavours, secondly, to busy the minds, and check the growth of grace in the souls of the saints, by employing them about things foreign to true godliness, and the power thereof ; Heb. xiii. 9

Remedies.

The rules for prevention and recovery are these that follow—

Rule 1.—Pray earnestly for a thorough change of the state and temper of thy soul, by sound conversion and regeneration.

Conversion turns us “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.” They are his own slaves and vassals, who are taken captive by him at his will. A sanctified heart is a sovereign defence against erroneous doctrines. It furnishes the soul with spiritual eyes, judicious ears, and a distinguishing taste, by which it may discern both good and evil, truth and error; yea it puts the soul at once under the conduct of the Spirit, and protection of the promise, John xvi. 13; and though this doth not secure a man from all lesser mistakes, yet it effectually secures him from those great ones, which are inconsistent with Christ and salvation.

Rule 2.—Acquaint yourselves with the wiles and methods of Satan, and be not “ignorant of his devices.”

When once you understand the paint with which he sets off the ugly face of error, you will not easily be enamoured with it. Though pretences of devotion on one side, and of purity, zeal, and reformation on the other, are pleasant sounds, yet the wary soul will examine, before it receive and admit, doctrinal points under these gilded titles. Those who have made their observations on the stratagems of Satan will heedfully observe both the tendency of doctrines, and the lives of their teachers; and if they find looseness, pride, and wantonness in them, it is not a glorious title, or magnificent name, that will charm them.

Rule 3.—Resign your minds and judgments in fervent prayer to the government of Christ, and conduct of the Spirit; and in all your addresses to God pray that he would keep them chaste and pure. Plead with God that part of Christ’s prayer; “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.”

Rule 4.—Live in the conscientious and constant prac-

tice of all those truths and duties which God has already manifested to you.

This will bring you under that blessed promise of Christ, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” Satan’s greatest successes are among idle, notional, and vain professors; not among humble, serious, and practical Christians.

The Eleventh Cause of Error.

Having considered the several internal causes of error, found in the evil dispositions of the seduced as also the impulsive cause, Satan, who fits suitable baits to all these sinful humors and evil tempers of the heart; we come next to consider the instrumental cause, employed by Satan in this work—the false teacher, whom Satan makes use of as his seeds-man, to disseminate and scatter erroneous doctrines and principles into the minds of men, ploughed up and prepared by those evil tempers before-mentioned, as a fit soil to receive them.

The choice of instruments is a principal part of Satan’s policy. Every one is not fit to be employed in such a service as this. All are not fit to be of the council of war, who can yet take their places of service in the field. Deep-headed men are coveted by Satan, to manage this design: none like an eloquent Tertullus to confront a Paul, *Acts xxiv. 1.*

The first instrument chosen by Satan to deceive man, was the serpent; because that creature “was more subtle than any beast of the field.” There is not a man of eminent parts, but Satan courts and solicits him for his service. St. Austin told an ingenuous, but unsanctified scholar, “The devil courts thy parts to adorn his cause.” He surveys the world, and wherever he finds more than ordinary strength of reason, pregnancy of wit, depth of learning, and elegance of language, that is the man he looks for. These are the men, who can almost indiscernibly sprinkle their errors among many precious truths, and wrap up their poisonous drugs in leaf-gold or sugar.

Remedies.

The proper remedies in this case are principally two—

Remedy 1.—Pray fervently and labor diligently in the use of all God's appointed means, to get more solidity of judgment and strength of grace, to establish you in the truth, and secure your souls against the cunning craftiness of men that lie in wait to deceive.

It is the ignorance and weakness of the people, which makes the factors for errors so successful as they are. So speaks the apostle; “With good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple;” harmless, weak, easy men, who have a desire to do well, but want wisdom to discern the subtleties of them who mean ill; who are void both of fraud in themselves, and suspicion of others. The more judicious we are, the more secure.

Remedy 2.—Labor to acquaint yourselves with the artifices which Satan's instruments generally make use of to seduce and draw men from the truth. The knowledge of them is a good defence against them.

Now there are two common artifices of seducers, which it is not safe for Christians to be ignorant of.

The first is this—they usually seek to disgrace and blast the reputation of those truths and ministers that they design afterwards to overthrow and ruin, and to beget credit and reputation to those errors which they have a mind to introduce. How many precious truths of God are at this day and with this design, defamed as legal and carnal doctrines; and those that defend them, as men of an old-testament spirit! Humiliation for sin, and contrition of spirit, fall under disgrace with many, as things not only needless, but pernicious to the souls of men, although they have not the least dependence upon them; yea, faith itself, as a pre-requisite to justification, is represented as no better than a condition pertaining to Adam's covenant.

Their other common artifice is to insinuate their false doctrines among many acknowledged and precious truths, which only serve for a convenient vehicle to them; and besides that, to make their errors as palatable as they can to the vitiated appetite of corrupt nature, to

carnal reason, spiritual pride, and the desire of fleshly liberty.

The Twelfth Cause of Error.

Having considered the several causes of errors found in the evil dispositions of the seduced, as also the impulsive and instrumental causes, I shall now proceed to discover some special and most successful methods frequently used by them, to draw the minds of men from the truth. Amongst which, that which comes first into consideration, is the great skill they have in representing the abuses of the ordinances of God and duties of religion, by wicked men, to deter tender and weak consciences from the due use of them, and all further attendance upon them.

The abuse of Christ's holy appointments is so cunningly improved to serve this design, that the minds of many well-meaning persons receive such deep disgust against them, that they are scarcely ever to be reconciled to them again.

If Satan can prevail first with wicked men to corrupt and abuse God's ordinances by superstitious mixtures and additions, and then with good men to renounce and slight them for the sake of those abuses; he fully obtains his design, and gives Christ a double wound at once, one by the hands of his avowed enemies, the other by the hands of his friends, no less grievous than the first. Wicked men first corrupt Christ's ordinances, and then good men nauseate them.

Remedies.

The proper remedies against errors insinuated by the abuses of duties, are such as follow—

Remedy 1.—Let men consider, that there is nothing in religion so great, so sacred, and so excellent, but some men have greatly corrupted or vilely abused it.

What is there in the whole world more precious and excellent than the free-grace of God? and yet you read of some that turned the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness; Jude 4; What more desirable to Christians than the glorious liberty Christ has purchased for them by his blood, and settled upon them in the gospel-charter—a li-

berty from Satan, sin, and the rigor and curse of the law? and yet you read of them that used this liberty for a cloak of maliciousness; 1 Pet. ii. 6. It is true Christ came to be a sacrifice for sin, but not a cloak for sin; to set us at liberty from the bondage of our lusts, not from the ties and duties of our obedience. And not only the liberty purchased by Christ, but the very person and gospel of Christ are liable to abuses; and oftentimes, through the corruption of men's hearts, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence. What then? Shall we renounce the grace of God, our Christian liberty, the very gospel, yea, and person of Christ himself, because each of them has been thus vilely abused by the wicked? At the peril of our eternal damnation be it, if we do so. "Blessed is he," saith our Lord, "that is not offended in me." Beware lest by this means Satan wound at once the Lord Jesus Christ by scandal, and thy soul by prejudice.

Remedy 2.—Consider also, that it is the nature and temper of a gracious soul to raise his esteem for, and heighten his love to, those ordinances which are most abused and disgraced by men.

The more they are abused and opposed by others, the higher they should be valued and honored by us. Such a spirit was found in Elijah; "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword," 1 Kings xix. 14.

A good man will strive to honor and secure those truths and duties most, which he finds under most disgrace or danger. He loves the truth sincerely, who cleaves to it and stands by it under all opposition. This is a good trial of the soundness of thy heart and purity of thine ends in religion; such a proof as the honor and reputation of religion in the world can never give thee.

Remedy 3.—Before you part with any ordinance or practice in religion, bethink yourselves whether you never found any spiritual blessings or advantages in that path which you are now tempted to forsake.

The Thirteenth Cause of Error.

Another method and artifice by which false teachers

draw multitudes of disciples after them, is by granting to their ignorant and ambitious followers the liberty of prophesying ; flattering them into a conceit of their excellent gifts and attainments, when they themselves have more need to be taught the principles of Christianity than undertake to expound and apply those profound mysteries to others. Satan has filled the church and world with errors and troubles this way.

When ignorant and inexperienced persons begin to think it a low and dull thing to sit from year to year under other men's teachings, and fancy that they are wiser than their teachers, their pride will quickly tempt them to show their ignorance, and that mischievous ignorance will prove dangerous to the truth and troublesome to the church. The apostle forbids the ordination of a novice, "lest he be lifted up, and fall into the condemnation of the devil;" and in 1 Tim. i. 7, he shows us the reason why some swerved and turned aside unto vain janglings : and it was this, that "they desired to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed."

I do not here censure and condemn the use and exercise of the gifts of all private Christians. There are to be found amongst them some persons of high parts, and answerable modesty and humility, who may be very useful when called to service in extraordinary cases by the voice of Providence. But when unqualified persons undertake such a work out of the conceit and pride of their own hearts, or are allured to it by the crafty designs of erroneous teachers, partly to overthrow a public, regular, and standing ministry in the church—this is the practice I here censure, which, like a Trojan horse, has sent forth multitudes of erroneous persons into the city of God to infest and defile it.

I do not doubt but that many a sincere Christian has been drawn into such an employment: it seems to put him into a capacity of honoring God in a more eminent way, which is a thing desirable to an honest and zealous heart. The temptation may be greatly strengthened by the plausible suggestions of cunning seducers, who tell us, that those ministers who oppose and condemn this practice, do it as men concerned for their own interest, as desirous

to monopolize the work to themselves, and as envying the Lord's people: and that Christ has given us a greater liberty in this case, than those men will allow us.

I will not here expose the follies and mischiefs introduced this way, as being willing neither to grieve the hearts of the sincere on the one side, nor to gratify scoffing atheists and profane enemies to religion on the other side; only this I will and must say, that by this means the sacred scriptures are most injuriously wrested, the peace and order of the church disturbed, and a great many mistakes and errors introduced.

Remedies.

The prevention and cure of errors thus introduced, or likely to be introduced, into the church, is by applying the following considerations—

Consideration 1.—Let all who encourage others, or who undertake by the encouragement of others, such a work as this, for which they are not competently qualified and unto which they are not regularly called, consider seriously with themselves into what danger they cast their own and other men's souls.

The apostle tells us, that “the unlearned and unstable do wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.” It is certainly more excusable to put an ignorant rustic into an apothecary's shop to compound a medicine of drugs and spirits which he understands not, and confidently administer the same to the bodies of men, than for such persons as are led by ignorance and confidence, to intermeddle with the ministerial employment; the one perhaps by mistake may poison men's bodies, but the other their souls. An ignorant pilot is rather to be trusted among rocks and quicksands, than a proud ignorant person with the conduct of souls.

Consideration 2.—What daring presumption is it to intrude ourselves into so great and weighty an employment, without any call or warrant of Christ!

The mysteries of the gospel must be committed to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others. Their abilities must be examined; 1 Tim. iii. 10; and the exercise of them warranted by a due and orderly appointment

thereunto; 1 Tim. iv. 14. Gifts and abilities are not of themselves sufficient to make a preacher. Some lawyers at the bar may be as skilful as the judge on the bench, but without a commission they dare not sit there.

Consideration 3.—The honor you desire, would be your greatest dishonor.

The scripture reckons false teachers among the basest of the people; “The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail,” the basest part of the whole body of the people; Isa. ix. 15. And so far is gospel-liberty from countenancing such dangerous irregularities, that we find, in a clear prophecy of gospel-times, what shame God will pour on such men, “It shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, and he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.”

The Fourteenth Cause of Error.

False teachers propagate their errors also by a spirit of enthusiasm, the usual concomitant of erroneous doctrine; and draw away multitudes after them, by pretending to extraordinary revelations, visions, and voices from heaven, which seem to give great credit to their way and party.

This was an old trick and practice of deceivers, Deut. xiii. 1, to give signs and wonders in confirmation of their words, which signs the Lord may permit to fall out to prove his people, though, for the most part, they are confuted by their unanswerable events.

Remedies.

The remedies in this case are such as follow—

Remedy 1.—Whatever doctrine or practice seeks credit to itself in this way, justly falls thereby under the suspicion, that it wants a solid scripture-foundation.

God has not left his people to seek satisfaction in such uncertain ways as these; but has given them a surer word of prophecy, to which they do well to take heed. He has tied us to the standing rule of the word, forbidding us to give heed to any other voice or spirit,

leading us any other way. Scripture-light is a safe and sure light, a pleasant and sufficient light.

“The scripture,” says Luther, “is so full, that as for visions, and revelations, I neither regard nor desire them.”

Remedy 2.—Consider how difficult, yea, and how impossible it is for a man to determine, that such a voice, vision, or revelation, is of God, and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it, seeing he has left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another.

The Fifteenth Cause of Error.

Another way in which false teachers discover their subtlety, is in timing their assaults, in choosing the proper season when the minds of men are most apt to be drawn away by their fair and specious pretences.

Such a season as this, they find about the time of men’s first conversion, or soon after their implantation into Christ. Now it is that their affections are most lively and vigorous, though their judgments are but weak. They have now such strong and deep apprehensions of the grace and love of Christ, and such transcendent zeal for him, that they easily embrace any thing whereby they conceive he may be honored and exalted. They have also such deep apprehensions of sin, that they are in danger to fly even from truth and duty itself, when it shall be artificially represented to them as sin. Besides, these young converts have not had time to confirm and root themselves in the truth; and trees newly planted are much more easily drawn up, than those which have spread and fastened their roots in the earth. It is observable what a swarm of false teachers troubled the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi, at and newly after their first planting: and what danger those young Christians were in, abundantly appears in the apostle’s frequent cautions and holy jealousies over them: he bids them “beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision;” “I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,” 2 Cor. xi. 3; he was afraid of the Galatians, “lest he had be-

stowed upon them labor in vain," Gal. iv. 11; he would not "give place to false brethren, no, not for an hour," Gal. ii. 5; he charges the Romans to receive them "that were weak in the faith, but not to doubtful disputations," Rom. xiv. 1. All which expressions discover his grounded jealousy, and their extraordinary danger of seduction at their first plantation. A novice in Christianity, is the person Satan seeks for. Strong believers are not in such apparent danger as weak ones. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," 1 John v. 21. The reason is, because warm affections, united with weak judgments, give a mighty advantage to seducers. Children are apt to be taken with beautiful appearances and fine shows; and erroneous teachers have the art to set a gloss of extraordinary sanctity on their dangerous opinions. Hence those persons who promoted the sect of the Nicolaitans, made use of a cunning woman, who, for her skill in painting errors with the colors of truth, got the name of Jezebel; Rev. ii. 20. That queen was famous for the art of painting, 1 Kings xvi, and so was this false prophetess. Indeed there is scarcely any eminent sect of errorists or heretics mentioned in church-history, but some curious feminine artist has been employed to lay the beautiful colors upon it. And the curious colors of holiness, zeal, and free grace, artificially laid on the face of error, how ugly soever in itself, sets it off temptingly to weak and injudicious minds.

Moreover, erroneous teachers are great boasters. They usually give out to the world what extraordinary comforts they meet with in their way, which proves a strong temptation to young converts, who have been lately in the depths of spiritual trouble, to try at least, if not to embrace it, for the expected comfort's sake.

How many pious ministers, on such grounds and pretences as these, have had their spiritual children rent from them as soon as born! They have travailed as in birth for them; and no sooner have they begun to take comfort in the success of their labors, than to the great grief and discouragement of their hearts, they have been bereaved of them. Those who have owned them as their spiritual fathers one month, have scarcely vouchsafed to

own them when they have met them in the streets another month.

Remedies.

The remedies in this case are twofold ; the first respects the spiritual father, and the second the spiritual children ; both are concerned in the danger ; may the Lord help both to attend to their duty !

Remedy 1.—Let all those whose ministry God blesses with the desirable fruits of conversion, look carefully after the souls of young converts.

No nurse should be more tender and careful of her charge, than a minister should be of his ; and to the care of a tender nurse, Paul compares his care over the young converts in Thessalonica, 1 Thess. ii. 7 ; for, alas ! they lie exposed to all dangers ; they are credulous, and seducers are cunning ; they want judgment to discern truth from error ; they have not yet attained unto senses exercised, and age in Christ to discern good from evil.

Shepherds, look to your flocks. Imitate the great shepherd of the sheep, “who gathereth the lambs with his arms, and carrieth them in his bosom.” Visit them frequently ; exhort and warn them diligently ; and use all means to establish them in the present truths.

Remedy 2.—Let young converts and weak Christians look carefully to themselves by a heedful attendance to the following truths—

First ; it is not safe to try to find Christ in one way, and comfort in another. God does not usually bless those ways to men’s comfort and edification, into which they turn aside from that good way wherein they first met with Christ and conversion. The same ministry and ordinances, which are appointed and blessed for the one, are likewise appointed and commonly blessed for the other ; Eph. iv. 11.

Secondly ; it is a manifest snare of the devil to take you off from the great work you are newly engaged in, by entangling your minds with notions that are foreign to it. Your hearts are now warm ; Satan labors in this way to cool them ; the cunning cheat labors to steal

away the sweet and nutritive food which is before you, and to place the hard and dry bones of barren controversies and insipid notions in their room. Your business is not to form syllogisms, or study solutions to cunning arguments about lower and lesser matters, so much as it is by prayer and self-examination to clear your interest in Christ, and to solve those doubts which lie with weight upon your spirits with reference to that great concern.

Thirdly ; it is a sad thing to grieve the hearts of those faithful ministers who have travailed in pain for us, and rejoiced in our conversion as the seal of their ministry.

The Sixteenth Cause of Error.

There is yet another artifice of false teachers to draw men into errors, and that is, by pressing the consciences of those on whom they have made some impression openly to declare their new opinions, and avow and own them before the world ; as knowing that this will rivet and fix them.

When they find men under half convictions and strong inclinations to their way, they are sure then to ply them with a thick succession of motives and arguments, to join themselves by a free and open profession to that erroneous party, which is headed by themselves. And the arguments usually pressed to this purpose, are the danger of delay, and the comfort of declaring themselves.

They press them with the danger of the least delay, by telling them, that now they are living every day and hour in known sin, and holding the truth of God in unrighteousness ; and the more tender the conscience is, the deeper impressions such discourses make, although the case indeed will not bear the weight they lay upon it, as having not that due allowance God gives of means of full information in matters of this nature ; yea, possibly driving them into as great a snare by precipitation and too hasty engagements under a doubting conscience.

They press them to a quick resolution by holding out
Div. No. XVII. 2 B

the expectation of abundance of comfort, inward peace, and joy, which will result from a full engagement of themselves. This was the very art and method by which Satan prevailed with Eve to swallow the bait; "God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"—the sooner thou tastest, the better; for the first taste will give thee a godlike knowledge, and marvellous advancement of understanding: didst thou but know the benefit that would accrue to thee hereby, thou wouldst not delay one moment. And thus by setting before her the speedy and immediate benefits of eating, Satan prevailed, and drew her into the fatal snare.

In this the ministers of Satan imitate the ministers of Christ. As these press men to make haste to Christ, lest by consulting with flesh and blood and listening to the temptations of Satan, hopeful inclinations should be blasted in the bud; so the others push men on to hasty resolutions, lest by hearkening to the voice of God's Spirit and their own consciences, the design they have so far advanced, should be lost and disappointed. The ministers of Christ urge men to a speedy change of their company, and to associate themselves with spiritual and profitable Christians, as well knowing of what great use this will be to confirm and strengthen them in the ways of God; so others, in like manner, vehemently urge them to associate with their party, as knowing how one wedges in and fixes another in the ways of error. For such reasons Satan pushes on half convictions into hasty resolutions, quick dispatch being his great advantage. This the apostle intimates in Gal. i. 6; "I marvel that ye are so soon removed"—what, so soon! Yes, if it had not been so soon, it might never have been at all.

Remedies.

The remedies in this case are such as follow—

Remedy 1.—Consider that hasty engagements, in weighty and disputable matters, have cost many souls dear.

As hasty marriages have produced long and late repentance, so has the forming of a hasty match betwixt

the mind and error. By entertaining of strange persons, men sometimes entertain angels unawares; but by entertainaing of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares. It is not safe to open the door of the soul, to let in strangers in the night; let them wait till a clear day-light of information show you what they are.

Remedy 2.—Weighty actions require suitable deliberation.

It was a saying of Augustus Cæsar, “ That is soon enough, that is well enough.” There are many things to be considered and thoroughly weighed, before a man change his judgment and embrace a new doctrine or opinion. Luther, in his epistle to the ministers of Norimberg, cites an excellent passage out of Basil: “ He who is about to separate himself from the society of his brethren, had need to coasider many things even unto anxiety; to beg of God the demonstration of truth, with many tears; and to pass many solitary nights with waking eyes, before he attempt to put such a matter into execution.” By the vote of the whole rational world, time and consideration ought to be proportionate to the weight of an undertaking.

Remedy 3.—The only season men have to weigh things judiciously and impartially, is before their affections are too far engaged, and their credit and reputation too much concerned.

Men are better able to weigh doctrines and opinions, whilst they are other men’s, than when they have espoused them, and made them their own. Before an opinion be espoused, the affections do not blind and pervert the judgment, as they do afterward. Self-love pulls down the balance at that end which is next us. If therefore, by hasty resolution, we lose this proper and advantageous season of deliberation, we are not likely to find such another.

Remedy 4.—Trust not to the clearness of your own unassisted eyes, nor to the strength of your single reason; but consult with others that are pious and judicious, especially your godly and faithful ministers; and hearken to the counsels they give you. Paul justly wondered that the Galatians were so soon removed, and well he might; for

had they not a Paul to consult with, before they gave their consent to false teachers ? or if he was at a distance from them, about the work of the Lord in remote places, had they no godly and judicious friends near them, whose prayers and assistances they might call in, as Daniel did, Dan. ii. 17 ? Woe unto him who is alone in a time of temptation, except the Lord be with him by extraordinary assistance and direction !

Remedy 5.—Suspect that opinion for erroneous, which is too importunate and pressing upon you, and will not allow you due time for consideration and means of information.

That which is a truth to-day will be a truth to-morrow; but that which looks like a truth to-day, may be detected and look like itself, an odious error, to-morrow. And this is the reason of that haste which Satan and his ministers make to gain our present consent, lest a speedy detection frustrate their design.

Application.

Inference 1.—From all that has been said about errors, we see the great usefulness and necessity of an able, faithful ministry in the church.

One special end of the ministry, is the establishment of the people's souls against the errors of the times; “He gave some apostles, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,” Eph. iv. 11. Ministers are shepherds; and without a shepherd how soon will the flock go astray! Moses was absent but a few days from the Israelites, and at his return found them all run into snares of idolatry. A minister's work is not only to feed, but defend the flock. “I am set,” says Paul, “for the defence of the gospel.” An orthodox and faithful minister is a double blessing to the people; but woe to that people, whose ministers, instead of securing them against errors, do cause them to err!

Inference 2.—This discourse shows us also how little quietness and peace the church may expect, till a greater degree of light and unity be poured out upon it.

We find the whole state of the Christian church, from the primitive days to the end of the world, set forth under the notion of one day, and that a strange day ; "the light of it shall neither be clear nor dark, nor day nor night, but at evening-time it shall be light ;" that is, it shall be a day full of alternate providences. Sometimes persecutions, heresies, and errors prevail, and these make that part of the day dark and gloomy ; and then truth and peace break forth again, and clear up the day. Thus it has been, and thus it will be, until the evening of it, and at evening-time it shall be light ; then light and love shall get the ascendancy of error and divisions. Most of our contentions are for want of greater measures of these.

Inference 3.—From the manifold causes and evil consequences of errors, we may see what a great mercy it is to be kept sound in judgment, steadfast and unmoveable in the truths and ways of Christ. A sound and steadfast Christian is a blessing in his generation, and a glory to his profession. Soundness of judgment must needs be a choice blessing ; because the understanding is that leading faculty which directs the will and conscience of man, and they direct his whole life and practice. How often and how earnestly does Christ pray for his people, that they may be kept in the truth ! It is true, orthodoxy in itself is not sufficient to any man's salvation ; but the conjunction of an orthodox head with an honest, sincere heart, always constitutes an excellent Christian ; Phil. i. 10. Happy is the man who has a head so hearted, and a heart so headed !

Inference 4.—By this discourse, we may further discover one great and special cause of the lamentable decay of the spirit and power of religion, amongst the professors of the present age.

It is a complaint more just than common, that "we do all fade as a leaf ;" and what is the cause ? Nothing more probable, than the wasting of our time and spirits in vain janglings and fruitless controversies, which, the apostle tells us, "have not profited," that is, they have greatly injured, "them that have been occupied therein."

Inference 5.—From this discourse we may gather also

286 *The Causes and Cure of Mental Errors.*

the grounds and reason of those frequent persecutions, which God suffers to fall on his churches and people.

I know the enemies of God's people aim at something else; they strike at religion itself; but whatever the intention of the agents may be, the issues of persecution are, on this account, greatly beneficial to the church—the wisdom of God makes them useful both to prevent and cure the mischief and dangers of errors. If persecution kill not, yet, it gives check to the rise and growth of errors; and if it do not perfectly unite the hearts of Christians, yet it cools and allays their sinful animosities. It affords them far better and more necessary work. Now, instead of racking their minds about unnecessary controversies, they find it high time to be searching their hearts, and examining the foundations of their faith and hope with respect to another world. Such times also discover the sincerity, zeal, and constancy of those of whom we were jealous, or against whom we were prejudiced before, because they followed not us.

Inference 6.—Let us learn hence both the duty and necessity of charity and mutual forbearance.

We have all our mistakes and errors, and therefore must maintain mutual charity under differences of judgment. I do not say but that an erring brother must be brought back if possible, and that by sharp rebukes too, if gentler means be ineffectual; and if God make us instrumental by this or any other method, to recover a brother from the error of his way, he will have great cause both to bless God and to thank the instrument who thereby saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins. It is our duty if we meet an enemy's ox or ass going astray, to bring him back again; Exod. xxiii. 4; much more the soul of a friend. We must not indeed make those things errors, that are none, nor stretch every innocent expression to that purpose, nor yet be too hasty in meddling with contention till we cannot be silent; but we must "buy the truth" and defend it, and then, whatever the expence be, truth will repay it.

A TREATISE
ON
THE RISE AND GROWTH
OF
ANTINOMIAN ERRORS.

ABRIDGED BY THE REV. C. BRADLEY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE design of the following sheets, introduced as an Appendix to the foregoing treatise on Errors, is principally to discharge and free the free grace of God from those dangerous errors, which fight against it under its own colors; partly to prevent the seduction of some that waver; and, lastly, though least of all, to vindicate my own doctrine, the scope and current whereof has always been, and shall ever be, to exalt the free grace of God in Christ, to draw the vilest of sinners to him, and relieve the distressed consciences of sin-burdened Christians.

Three things I principally aim at in this Appendix—first, to give the reader the most probable rise of antinomianism; secondly, to give him an account of the principal errors of that sect; and, thirdly, to confirm and establish Christians against them.

CHAPTER I.

On the Rise of Antinomianism.

THE scriptures foreseeing there would arise men in the church, who would wax wanton against Christ, and turn

his grace into lasciviousness, have not only cautioned us in general to beware of such opinions as corrupt the doctrine of free-grace, but have particularly marked those very opinions by which it would be abused, and made abundant provision against them; as, for instance, all slighting and vilifying opinions or expressions of the holy law of God, Rom. vii. 7, 12; all opinions and principles inclining men to a careless disregard and neglect of the duties of obedience, under pretence of free grace and liberty by Christ, James ii; Matth. xxv; all opinions neglecting or slighting sanctification, as the evidence of our justification, and rendering it needless or sinful to try the state of our souls by the graces of the Spirit wrought in us, which is the principal scope of the first epistle of John.

Nothing is more opposed to licentiousness than the free grace of God, which teaches us, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Nor can it without manifest violence be made pliable to such wicked purposes; and therefore the apostle tells us, Jude 4, that this is done by "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness;" transferring it, by a corrupt, abusive interpretation, to such uses and purposes as it abhors. No such licentious conclusions can be inferred from the gospel-doctrines of grace and liberty, but by wresting them from their true scope and intent, by the wicked arts and practices of deceivers.

The gospel makes sin more odious than the law did; and discovers the punishment of it in a more severe and dreadful manner, than ever it was discovered before. "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. It shows our obligations to duty to be stronger than ever, and our encouragements to holiness greater than ever, 2 Cor. vii. 1. And yet corrupt nature will be still tempting men to corrupt and abuse it.

This perversion and abuse of free grace and Christian liberty, is justly chargeable, though on different accounts, both upon wicked and good men. Wicked men corrupt

it designedly, that by entitling God to their sins, they may sin the more quietly and securely. So the devil instigated the heathens to sin against the light and law of nature, by representing their gods to them as drunken and lascivious deities. So the Nicolaitans, and the school of Simon, and after them the Gnostics and other heretics, in the very dawning of gospel light and liberty, began presently to loose the bond of restraint from their lusts, under pretence of grace and liberty. The Etiani blushed not to teach, that sin, and perseverance in sin, could hurt the salvation of none, so that they would embrace their principles. What vile and abominable inferences the Manicheans, Valentinians, and Cerdonites, drew from the grace and liberty of the gospel, in the following ages; I had rather mourn over than recite; and if we come down to the *fifteenth century*, we shall find the Libertines of those days as deeply drowned in this sin, as those that went before them. Calvin mournfully observes, that under pretence of Christian liberty, they trampled all godliness under foot. There are however some whose judgments are unhappily tainted and leavened with those loose doctrines, yet being in the main godly persons, they dare not take liberty to sin or live in the neglect of known duties, though their principles too much incline that way; but though they dare not, others who imbibe corrupt notions from them, will dare to sin; and the renowned piety of the authors will be no antidote against the danger, but will make the poison operate the more powerfully.

Now it his highly probable such men as these may have been drawn into these dangerous opinions, by these or similar means.

It is likely that some of them may have felt in themselves the anguish of a perplexed conscience under sin, and not being able to live with these terrors of the law and dismal fears of conscience, may too hastily have snatched at those doctrines which promise them relief and ease.

Others have been induced to espouse these opinions from the excess of their zeal against the errors of the Papists, who have notoriously corrupted the doctrine of justification by free grace, decried imputed righteousness,

and exalted inherent righteousness above it. The Papists designedly and industriously sealed up the scriptures from the people, lest they should there discover those sovereign and effectual remedies, which God has provided for their distressed consciences, in the riches of his own grace and the meritorious death of Christ. But as soon as the light of reformation had discovered the free grace of God to sinners, all good men, who were enlightened by the reformation, justly and deeply abhorred Popery, as the enemy of the grace of God and true peace of conscience, and fixed themselves upon the sound and comfortable doctrines of justification by faith through the alone righteousness of Christ; meanwhile thankfully acknowledging, that they who believe ought also to maintain good works. But there have been others who, transported by an indiscreet zeal, have almost bent the grace of God as far too much the other way, and have both spoken and written many things very unbecoming the grace of God, and tending to looseness and neglect of duty.

It is manifest, that others have been engulphed into those dangerous quicksands of Antinomian errors, by separating the Spirit from the written word. If once a man pretend the Spirit without the scriptures to be his rule, whither will not his own deluding fancies carry him, under a vain and sinful pretence of the Spirit?

And it is not unlikely, but that a comparative weakness, and injudiciousness of mind, meeting with a fervent zeal for Christ and his glory, may have induced others to espouse such taking and plausible, though pernicious doctrines. They are not aware of the dangerous consequences of the opinions they embrace, and what looseness may be occasioned by them. I speak not of occasions taken, but given, by such opinions and expressions. A good man will draw excellent inferences of duty from the very same doctrine that a bad man draws evil from. Instance that of the shortness of time, whence the apostle infers abstinence, strictness, and diligence, 1 Cor. vii. 29; but the Epicure infers from it all manner of dissolute and licentious practices; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," 1 Cor. xv. 22. The best doctrines are in this way liable to abuse. But let all good men beware of

such opinions and expressions, as give a handle to wicked men to abuse the grace of God, which haply the author himself dare not do, and may strongly hope others may not do; but if the principle will admit of it, it is in vain to think that corrupt nature will not catch at it, and make a vile use and dangerous improvement of it. For example—if such a principle as this be asserted for a truth, that men need not fear that any, or all the sins they commit, will do them any hurt; let the author, or any man in the world, warn and caution readers not to abuse this doctrine, it is to no purpose: the doctrine itself is full of dangerous consequences, and wicked men have the best skill to infer and draw them forth, to cherish and countenance their lusts. That which the author might design for the relief of the distressed, quickly turns itself into poison, in the bowels of the wicked. Nor can we excuse it, by saying that any gospel-truth may be thus abused; for this is not one of that number, but a principle that gives offence to the godly, and encouragement to the ungodly.

CHAPTER II.

Antinomian Errors.

LET US now view some of the chief doctrines commonly called Antinomian. I shall begin with the dangerous mistake of the Antinomians in the doctrine of justification. The article of justification is deservedly styled by our divines, the very pillar of the Christian religion.

In two things however I must do the Antinomians justice.—I acknowledge, that though their errors about justification are great and dangerous, yet they are not so much about the substance, as about the mode of a sinner's justification; an error far inferior to that of the Papists, who depress the righteousness of Christ, and exalt their own inherent righteousness in the business of justification. I am bound also in charity to believe, that some among them do hold those errors but speculatively,

whilst the truth lies nearer their hearts, and will not suffer them to reduce their own opinions into practice.

But I look upon such doctrines to be in themselves of a very dangerous nature, and the malignity and contagion of them would certainly spread much farther into the world than it does, had not God provided two powerful antidotes to resist the malignity—the scope and current of scripture, and the experience and practice of the saints.

These doctrines run cross to the scope and current of the scriptures, which constantly speak of all unregenerate persons as children of wrath, without Christ, and under condemnation. They frequently discover God's anger, and tell us his castigatory rods of affliction are laid even upon the elect for their sins. They represent sin as the greatest evil; most opposed to the glory of God and good of the saints; and are therefore filled with cautions and threatenings to prevent their sinning. They call the saints frequently and earnestly, not only to mourn for their sins before the Lord; but to pray for the pardon and remission of them in the blood of Christ. They give us a far different account of saving faith; and do not place it in a persuasion more or less of Christ's love to us, or a manifestation in our consciences of the actual remission of our sins before we had a being; but in receiving Christ as the gospel offers him for righteousness and life. They frequently call the people of God to the examination and trial of their interest in Christ by marks and signs; and accordingly furnish them with variety of such marks from the divers parts or branches of sanctification in themselves. They earnestly and every where press believers to strictness and constancy in the duties of religion, as the way wherein God would have them to walk. They infer duties from privileges; and therefore the Antinomian dialect is a wild note which the generality of serious Christians easily distinguish from the scripture-style and language.

The experience and practice of the saints recorded in scripture, as well as our cotemporaries, or those whose lives are recorded for our imitation, greatly secure us from the spreading malignity of Antinomianism. Converse with the living, or read the histories of dead saints,

and you will find, that in their addresses to God they still bless and praise him, for that great and wonderful change of state which was made upon them when they first believed in Christ, and when on their believing they passed from death to life; freely acknowledging before God, that they were before their conversion equal in sin and misery with the vilest wretches in the world. They heartily mourn for their daily sins, fear nothing more than sin; no afflictions in the world go so near their hearts as sin does. They mourn for the hardness of their hearts, because they can mourn no more for sin. They acknowledge that the rods of God upon them, are not only the evidences of his displeasure against them for their sins, but the fruits of their uneven walking with him; and that the greatest of their afflictions is less than the least of their iniquities deserve. They fall at their Father's feet as oft as they fall into sin, humbly and earnestly suing for pardon through the blood of Christ. They are not only sensible that God sees sin in them, but that he sees such and so great evils in them, as make them admire his patience, that they are not consumed in their iniquities. They find cause enough at times to suspect their own sincerity, to doubt the truth of their faith and of their graces; and are therefore frequent and serious in the trial and examination of their own states by scriptural marks and signs. They urge the commands and threatenings, as well as the promises, upon their own hearts to promote sanctification; they excite themselves to duty and watchfulness against sin; they also encourage themselves by the rewards of obedience, knowing their labor is not in vain in the Lord. And all this while they look not for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ; nor for that in the law, which is only to be found in the gospel; nor for that on earth, which is only to be found in heaven. This is the way that they take; and he who shall tell them that their sins can do them no hurt, or their duties do them no good, speaks to them not only as a barbarian, in a language they understand not, but in such a language as their souls detest and abhor. Moreover, the zeal and love of Christ and his glory being kindled in their souls, they have no patience to hear such doctrines

as derogate from his glory, under a pretence of honoring and exalting him. It wounds and grieves their very hearts to see the world hardened in their prejudices, and a gap opened to all licentiousness.

But notwithstanding this double antidote and security, we find, by daily experience, such doctrines too much prevailing in the professing world. For my own part, he who searches my heart and reins, is witness, that I would rather have my right hand wither, and my tongue rot within my mouth, than speak one word, or write one line to cloud and diminish the free grace of God. Let it arise and shine in its meridian glory. None owes more to it, or expects more from it, than I do; and what I shall write in this controversy, is to vindicate it from those doctrines and opinions, which, under pretence of exalting it, do really militate against it.

Error I.

To begin therefore with the first and leading error, that *the justification of sinners is an imminent and eternal act of God, not only preceding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin in our persons, that we are as clean from sin as Christ himself.*

To stop the progress of this error, I shall lay down the opinion of the orthodox about it, and then offer some reasons for the refutation of it.

That which I take to be the truth agreed upon and asserted by sound and reformed divines, touching justification, is this—justification may be considered in a twofold respect—according to God's eternal decree; or, according to the execution thereof in time.

View it according to God's eternal decree and purpose, and in this respect grace is said to be “given us in Christ before the world began,” 2 Tim. i. 19; and we are said to be “predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ,” Eph. i. 5. View it according to the execution thereof in time, they again distinguish it by considering it two ways—in its imputation by Christ, and in its application to us.

That very mercy or privilege of justification, which God from all eternity, purely out of his benevolent love, purposed and decreed for his elect, was also in time purchased for them by the death of Christ; as in Rom. v. 9, 10, where we are said to be "justified by his blood." He is said to have "made peace through the blood of his cross; to reconcile all things to himself," Col. i. 20. to be delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25. It is said that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses," 2 Cor. v. 19. God the Father had in the death of Christ, a foundation of reconciliation, whereby he became propitious to his elect, that he might absolve and justify them.

It must be considered also in its application to us, which application is made in this life at the time of our effectual calling, when a sinner is united to Christ by faith, and so passes from death to life, from a state of condemnation into a state of absolution and favor; this is our actual justification, Rom. v. 1; Acts xiii. 39; John v. 24; which actual justification is again considered two ways—universally and in general, as to the state of the person; specifically and particularly, as to the acts of sin.

As soon as we are received into communion with Christ, and his righteousness is imputed by God and received by faith, immediately we pass from a state of death and condemnation to a state of life and justification, and all sins already committed, are remitted without exception or revocation; and not only so, but a remedy is given us in the righteousness of Christ against sins to come: and though the particular sins we afterwards fall into, do need particular pardons, yet, by the renewed acts of faith and repentance, the believer applies to himself the righteousness of Christ, and they are pardoned.

Again; divines carefully distinguish betwixt the application of justification by God to our persons, and its declaration or manifestation in us and to us. Which manifestation, or declaration, is either private, in the conscience of a believer; or public, at the bar of judgment.

And thus justification is in many ways distinguished. But, notwithstanding all this, it is still an undivided act,

not indeed on our part, for it is iterated in many acts ; but on God's part, who at once decreed it, and on Christ's part, who by one offering purchased it, and, at the time of our vocation, universally applied it, as to the state of the person justified ; and that so effectually, as no future sin shall bring that person any more under condemnation.

In these opinions the generality of reformed orthodox divines are agreed ; and the want of thus distinguishing, has led the Antinomians into this first error about justification, and that error has led them into most of their other errors.

That this doctrine of theirs, which teaches that men are justified actually and completely before they have a being, is an error, and has no solid foundation to support it, may be evidenced by these three reasons—because it is irrational ; because it is unscriptural ; because it is injurious to Christ and the souls of men.

1. It is irrational to imagine that men are actually justified before they have a being, by an immanent act or decree of God. Let the following particulars be weighed in the balance of reason.

Can we rationally suppose, that pardon and acceptance can be affirmed or predicated of that which is not? Reason tells us, that what is not, can neither be condemned nor justified : but before the creation, or before a man's particular conception, he was not, and therefore could not in his own person be a subject of justification. Where there is no law, there is no sin ; where there is no sin, there is no punishment ; where there is neither sin nor punishment, there can be no guilt, (for guilt is an obligation to punishment;) and where there is neither law nor sin, nor obligation to punishment, there can be no justification. He who is not capable of a charge, is not capable of a discharge. What remains then, but that either the elect must exist from eternity, or be justified in time ? It is true, future beings may be considered as in the purpose and decree of God from all eternity, or as in the intention of Christ, who died intentionally for the sins of the elect, and rose again for their justification ; but neither the decree of God, nor the death of Christ takes place upon any man for his actual justification, until he personally exist : for the

object of justification, is a sinner actually ungodly, Rom. iv. 5; but such no man is, or can be, from eternity.

In justification there is a change made in the state of the person, Rom. v. 8, 9; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. By justification men pass from a state of death to a state of life; but the decree or purpose of God, in itself, makes no such actual change in the state of any person. It has indeed the nature of a universal cause; but a universal cause produces nothing without particulars. If our state be changed, it is not by an immanent act of God. A mere intention to justify us in due time and order, makes no change on our state till that time come, and the particular causes have operated. A prince may have a purpose or intention to pardon a condemned traitor, and free him from that condemnation in due time; but whilst the law that condemned him, stands in its full force and power against him, he is not justified or acquitted, notwithstanding that gracious intention, but still stands condemned. So it is with us, till by faith we are implanted into Christ. It is true Christ is a surety for all his, and has satisfied for their debt; he is a common head to all his people, as Adam was to all his children, Rom. v. 19; but as the sin of Adam condemns none but those that are in him, so the righteousness of Christ actually justifies none but those who are in him; and none are actually in him but believers; therefore, till we believe, no actual change passes or can pass in our state. This hypothesis then is contrary to reason.

2. As this opinion is irrational, so it is unscriptural. For the scripture frequently speaks of remission or justification as a future act, and therefore not from eternity; "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him," Rom. iv. 23, 24; "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham," Gal. iii. 8. The gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified; but if they were justified from eternity, how was the gospel preached before their justification?

The scripture leaves all unbelievers, without distinction,

under condemnation and wrath. The curse of the law lies upon them all till they believe ; " He that believeth in him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not, is condemned already," John iii. 18. And in Eph. ii. 3, 12, 13, the very elect themselves are said to have been by nature the children of wrath, even as others." They were at that time, or during that state of nature, (which takes in all the whole space betwixt their birth and conversion) " without Christ, without hope, without God in the world." But if this opinion be true, that the elect were justified from eternity or from the time of Christ's death, then it cannot be true, that the elect by nature are children of wrath, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world ; except these two may consist together, (which is absolutely impossible) that the children of wrath, without God, Christ, or hope, are actually discharged from their sins and dangers, by a free and gracious act of justification.

But it may be replied, does not scripture say, " Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ?" If none can charge the elect, then God has discharged them. In reply to this objection, we observe that God has not actually discharged them, as they are elect, but as they are justified elect ; for so runs the text ; and it clears itself in the very next words, " It is God that justifieth." When God hath actually justified an elect person, none can charge him.

This opinion is also contrary to the scriptural order of justification, which places it not only after Christ's death in the place last cited, Rom. viii. 33 ; but also after our actual vocation ; as is plain in ver. 30. " Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Is it absurd to place vocation before predestination, or glorification before justification ? Surely then it must also be absurd to place justification before vocation ; the one as well as the other confounds and breaks the scripture order : You may as well say, men shall be glorified who were never justified, as say they may be justified before they believe or exist. So that you see the notion of justification from eternity, or

before our actual existence and effectual vocation, is a notion as repugnant to sacred scripture, as it is to sound reason.

3. And as it is repugnant to reason and scripture, so it is highly injurious to Jesus Christ and the souls of men.

It greatly injures the Lord Jesus Christ, and robs him of the glory of being our Saviour; for if the elect be justified from eternity, Christ cannot be the Saviour of the elect, as most assuredly he is; for if Christ save them, he must save them as persons subject to perishing, either "de facto" or "de jure." But if the elect were justified from eternity, they could, in neither respect, be liable to perish; for he who was eternally justified, was never condemned, nor capable of condemnation; and he who never was, nor could be condemned, could never be subject to perishing; and he who never was, nor could be subject to perishing, can never truly and properly be said to be saved. If it be said the elect were not justified till the death of Christ, I demand then, what became of all them who died before the death of Christ? If they were not justified, they could not be glorified; for this is sure, from Rom. viii. 30, that the whole number of the glorified in heaven is made up of such as were justified on earth: let men take heed, therefore, lest, under pretence of exalting Christ, they bereave him of the glory of being the Saviour of his church.

It bereaves him of another glorious royalty. The scripture every where makes our justification the result and fruit of the meritorious death of Christ; but if men were justified from eternity, how is their justification the fruit and result of the blood of the cross, as it plainly appears from these scriptures to be?

Nay, this opinion leaves no place for the satisfaction of justice by the blood of Christ for our sins. He did not die, according to this opinion, to pay our debts. And here Antinomianism and Socinianism meet, and congratulate each other. If there were no debts owing to the justice of God from eternity, Christ could not die to pay them; and it is manifest there were no debts due to God's justice from eternity, on the account of his people,

if his people were from eternity justified ; unless you will say, a person may be justified, and yet his debts not paid. All justification dissolves the obligation to punishment.

And as it hath been proved to be highly injurious to the Lord Jesus, so this opinion is greatly injurious to the souls of men, as it naturally leads them into all those wild and licentious opinions, which necessarily flow from it, as from the radical, prolific error, whence most of the rest derive themselves, as will immediately appear.

Error II.

That justification by faith is nothing more than the manifestation to us of what was really and actually done before ; or a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us ; and that when persons believe, that which was hid before does then only appear to them.

As the former error dangerously corrupts the doctrine of justification, so this corrupts the doctrine of faith ; and therefore deserves to be exploded by all Christians.

That there is a manifestation and discovery of the special love of God and our own saving concern in the death of Christ to some Christians, at some times, cannot be denied. St. Paul could say, that Christ loved him, and gave himself for him ; but to say that this is the justifying act of faith, whereby a sinner passes from condemnation and death into a state of righteousness and life ; this I must look upon as a great error ; and that for the following reasons.—

1. Because there are multitudes of believing and justified persons in the world, who have no such manifestation, evidence, or assurance, that God laid their iniquities upon Christ, and that he died to put away their sins ; but daily conflict with strong fears and doubts, whether it be so or not. There are but few among believers who attain to such a persuasion, as Antinomians make to be all that is meant in scripture by justification through faith. Many thousand new-born Christians live as the new-born babe, which knows neither its own estate nor the inheritance to which it is born. Now that cannot be the

saving and justifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified persons.

2. That cannot be a justifying act of faith which is not constant and abiding with the justified person, but comes and goes, is frequently lost and recovered, the state of the person still remaining the same. And such contingent things are these persuasions and manifestations. They come and go, are won and lost, the state of the person still remaining the same. Job was as much a justified believer when he complained that God was his enemy, as when he could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." The same may be said of David, Heman, Asaph, and the greatest number of justified believers recorded in the scripture. There are two things belonging to a justified state—that which is essential and inseparable, to wit, faith uniting the soul to Christ; and that which is contingent and separable, to wit, evidence and persuasion of our interest in him. Those believers who walk in darkness and have no light, have yet a real special interest in God as their God, Isa. 1. 10. Here then you find believers without persuasion or manifestation of God's love to them; which could never be, if justifying faith consisted in a personal persuasion, manifestation, or evidence of the love of God and pardon of sin to a man's soul. That cannot be the justifying faith spoken of in scripture, without which a justified person may live in Christ and be as much in a state of pardon, and acceptance with God, when he wants it, as when he has it. But such is persuasion, evidence, or manifestation of a man's particular interest in the love of God, or the pardon of his sins. Therefore this is not the justifying faith the scripture speaks of.

3. That only is justifying, saving faith, which gives the soul right and title to Christ, and the saving benefits which come through Christ on all the children of God. Now, it is not a persuasion that Christ is ours, but acceptance of him, that gives us an interest in Christ, and the saving benefits and privileges of the children of God. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name," John i. 12. So that unless the

Antinomians can prove, that receiving of Christ, and personal persuasion of pardon are one and the same thing, and, consequently, that all believers in the world are persuaded or assured, that their sins are pardoned, and reject from the number of believers all tempted, deserted, dark, and doubting Christians ; this persuasion they speak of is not, nor can it be, the act of faith which justifies the person of a sinner before God.

4. A man may be strongly persuaded of the love of God to his soul and of the pardon of his sins, and yet have no interest in Christ, nor be in a pardoned state. This was the case of the Pharisees and others, Luke xviii. 9; Rev. iii. 17; therefore this persuasion cannot be justifying faith. If a persuasion be that which justifies the persuaded person, then the Pharisees and Laodiceans were justified. O how common and easy is it for the worst of men to be strongly persuaded of their good condition, whilst humble serious Christians doubt and stagger ! I know not what such doctrine as this is useful for, but to beget and strengthen that sin of presumption, which sends down multitudes to hell out of the professing world. For what is more common amongst the most carnal and unsanctified part of the world, not only among such as are moral, but even among the most flagitious and profane, than to support themselves by false persuasions of their good estate ? When they are asked, in order to their conviction, what hopes of salvation they have, and how they are founded; their common answer is, that Christ died for sinners, and that they are persuaded, that whatever he has done for any other, he has done for them as well as others : but such a persuasion cometh not of him that called them, and is of dangerous consequence.

5. This doctrine is certainly unsound, because it confounds the distinction betwixt a dogmatical and a saving faith ; and makes it all one, to believe an axiom or proposition, and to believe savingly in Christ to eternal life. What is it to believe that God laid our iniquities upon Christ, more than the mere assent of the understanding to a scripture axiom, or proposition, without any consent of the will, to receive Jesus Christ as the gospel offers him ? And this is no more than what any unregenerate

person may do ; yea, the very devils themselves assent to the truth of scripture axioms or propositions as well as men ; " Thou believest there is one God ; thou doest well ; the devils also believe and tremble," James ii. 19. The assent of the understanding may be often given to a scripture-proposition, whilst the heart and will remain carnal, and utterly adverse to Jesus Christ. I may believe dogmatically, that the iniquities of men were laid upon Christ, and persuade myself presumptively, that mine, as well as other men's, were laid upon him ; and yet remain a perfect stranger to all saving union and communion with him.

6. This opinion cannot be true, because it takes away the only support which bears up the soul of a believer in times of temptation and desertion.

How will you comfort a distressed soul that says, and says truly, " I have no persuasion that Christ is mine, or that my sins are pardoned ; but I am heartily willing to cast my poor sin-burthened soul upon him, that he may be mine. I do not certainly know that he died intentionally for me, but I lie at his feet to cleave to him. I wait at the door of hope. I stay and trust upon him, though I walk in darkness and have no light." Now let such a doctrine as this be preached to a soul in this condition, and we may be sure that it is the condition of many thousands belonging to Christ ; bring this doctrine to them, and tell them, that unless they are persuaded of the love of God and that God laid their iniquities on Christ, except they have some manifestation that their persons were justified from eternity, their accepting of Christ, consent of their wills, and waiting at his feet, signify nothing ; if they believe not that their particular sins were laid upon Christ, and are pardoned to them by him, they are still unbelievers, and have no part or portion in him. Whatever pretences of spiritual comfort and relief the Antinomian doctrine makes, you see by this that it really deprives a very great, if not the greatest number of God's people of their best and sweetest relief in days of darkness and spiritual distress. So that this doctrine which makes manifestation and assurance the very essence of justifying faith, appears hereby to be both a false and very dangerous doctrine.

Error III.

There is as much danger to the souls of men in their third error—that men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question whether they believe or not; nay, that they ought no more to question their faith than to question Christ.

What an easy way to heaven is the Antinomian way! Were it but as true and safe to the soul, as it is easy and pleasing to the flesh, who would not embrace it? What a charm of the devil is prepared in these two propositions! Be but persuaded more or less of Christ's love to thy soul, say these men, and that is justifying faith. Here is a snare of the devil laid for the souls of men. And then to make it fast and sure upon the soul, and effectually to prevent the discovery of their error, tell them they need no more doubt or question their faith than to question Christ, and the work is done to all intents.

Now that this is an error and a very dangerous one, will appear from the following reasons—

1. The questioning and examining of our faith is a commanded scripture-duty: “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves,” 2 Cor. xiii. 5. A multitude of other scriptures recommend holy jealousy, serious self-trial and examination of our faith, as the unquestionable duties of the people of God. But if we ought to question our faith no more than we ought to question Christ, away then with all self-examination, and diligence to make our calling and election sure; for where there is no doubt nor danger, there is no place or room for examination, or further endeavours to make it surer than it is. How do you like this doctrine, Christians? How many are there among you, who find no more cause to question your own faith or interest in Christ, than you do to question, whether there be a Christ, or whether he shed his blood for the remission of any man's sins?

2. This is a very dangerous error, and it is the more dangerous because it leaves no way to recover a presumptuous sinner out of his dangerous mistakes; but confirms and fixes him in them to the great hazard of his

eternal ruin. It cuts off all means of conviction or better information. According to this doctrine, it is impossible for a man to think himself something, when he is nothing; or to be guilty of such a cheat put by himself upon his own soul, James ii. 22. This, in effect, bids a man keep on right or wrong. He is sure enough of heaven, if he is but strongly persuaded that Christ died for him, and that he shall come thither at last. Certainly this was not the counsel Christ gave to the self-deceived Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Instead of dissuading them from self-jealousy and suspicion of their condition, whether their faith and state were safe or not, he rather counsels them to buy eye-salve, that is, to labor after better information of the true state and condition they were in, and not cast away their souls by false persuasions and vain confidences.

3. This doctrine cannot be true, because it supposes every persuasion or strong conceit of a man's own heart, to be as infallibly sure and certain, as the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No truth in the world can be surer than this, that Jesus Christ died for sinners; "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation;" this is a foundation-stone, a tried precious corner-stone, a sure foundation laid by God himself; and shall the strong-conceits and confidences of men's hearts vie and compare in point of certainty with it? As well may probable and merely conjectural propositions compare with axioms that are self-evident, or demonstrative arguments which leave no doubts behind them. Know we not, that "the heart is deceitful above all things," the most notorious cheat and impostor in the world? Does it not deceive all the formal hypocrites in the world, in this very point? And shall every strong conceit and presumptuous confidence, begotten of Satan by a deceitful heart, and nursed up by self-love, pass without any examination or suspicion for as infallible and assured a truth, as that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? The Lord sweep that doctrine out of the world by reformation, which is like to sweep so many thousand souls into hell by a remediless self-deception.

Error IV.

The fourth Antinomian error is this—that *believers are not bound to confess their sins or pray for the pardon of them, because their sins were pardoned before they were committed, and pardoned sin is no sin.*

If this be true doctrine, then it will justify and make good such conclusions and inferences as these, which necessarily flow from it; namely, that there is no sin in believers; or if there be, the evil is very inconsiderable; or, whatever evil is in it, it is not the will of God that they should either confess it, mourn over it, or pray for the remission of it. Whatever he requires of others, yet they need take no notice of it, so as to afflict their hearts for it. God has exempted them from such concernments. But neither of these conclusions are either true or tolerable; therefore the principle is not true which yields them.

1. It is not true or tolerable to affirm, that there is no sin in a believer; “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” 1 John i. 18. “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not,” Eccl. vii. 20. “In many things we offend all,” James iii. 2. The scriptures plainly affirm it, and the universal experience of all the saints sadly confirms it. It is true, the blood of Christ has taken away the guilt of sin, so that it shall not condemn believers; and the Spirit of sanctification has taken away the dominion of sin, so that it does not reign over believers; but nothing, except glorification, utterly destroys the existence of sin in believers. The acts of sin are our acts, and not Christ’s; and the stain and pollution of those sinful acts, are the burdens and infelicities of believers, even in their justified state. Dr. Crisp indeed calls that objection (I suppose he means the distinction betwixt the guilt of sin, and sin itself) a simple objection, and tells us, that the very sin itself, as well as the guilt of it, passed off from us, and was laid upon Christ; so that speaking of the sins of blasphemy, murder, theft, adultery, and lying, he says, “From that time that they were laid upon Christ, thou ceasest to be a trans-

gressors. If thou hast a part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of thine become actually the transgressions of Christ. So that now thou art not an idolater, or persecutor, a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer; thou art not a sinful person; Christ is made that very sinfulness before God." Such expressions justly offend and grieve the hearts of Christians, and expose Christianity to scorn and contempt. Was it not enough that the guilt of our sin was laid on him, but we must imagine also, that the thing itself, sin, with all its deformity and pollution, should be essentially transferred from us to Christ? No, no. After we are justified, sin "dwelleth in us," warreth in us, and "bringeth us into captivity," burdens and oppresses our very souls. Methinks I need not stand to prove what I should think no sound experienced Christian dares to deny, that there is much sin still remaining in the persons of the justified. He that dares to deny it, hath little acquaintance with the nature of sin, and of his own heart.

2. It is neither true nor tolerable to say, that there is no considerable evil in the sins of believers, deserving a mournful confession or petition for pardon. The desert of sin is hell. It is an artifice of Satan to draw men to sin, by persuading them there is no great evil in it; but none except fools will believe it. "Fools, indeed, make a mock at sin;" but all who understand either the intrinsic evil of it, or the sad and dismal effects produced by it, are far from thinking it a light or inconsiderable evil. The sins, even of believers, greatly wrong and offend their God, Psal. li. 4; and is that a light thing with us? They interrupt and clog our communion with God, Rom. vii. 21; they grieve the good Spirit of God; Eph. iv. 30. Certainly these are no inconsiderable mischiefs.

3. Now if there is sin in believers, and so much evil in their sins, then undoubtedly it is their duty to confess it freely, mourn for it bitterly, and pray for the pardon of it earnestly; unless God have any where discharged them from these duties, and told them these are none of their concerns, and that he expects not these things from justified persons. But on the contrary, you find the whole current of scripture running strongly and constantly in

direct opposition to such idle and sinful notions. For God has plainly declared it to be his will, that his people should confess their sins before him, and he has strongly connected their confessions with their pardons, 1 John v. 9; and frequently suspends from them the comfortable sense of forgiveness, till their hearts are brought to this duty, Psal. xxxii. 5. compared with verses 3, 4; the more to engage them to this duty, by the sensible ease and comfort attending and following it. He also enjoins it upon them, that they mourn for their sins, Isa. xxii. 12; expresses his great delight in contrition and brokenness of spirit for sin, Isa. lxvi. 2. Christ himself pronounces a blessing upon them that mourn, Mat. v. 4. Justified Paul mournfully confesses his former blasphemies, persecutions, and injuries done against Christ, 1 Tim. i. 13. So did Ezra, Daniel, and other eminent saints.

Yes, say some, they did indeed confess their sins committed before their justification, but not their after-sins. According to Antinomian principles, I would demand, if all the elect were justified from eternity, what sins any of them could confess which they had committed before their justification? Or, if they were justified from the time of Christ's death, what were the sins which any of us have to confess, who had not a being, and therefore had not actually sinned till long after the death of Christ? But I hope none will deny, that the mournful complaints the apostle makes for sin, Rom. vii. 23, 24, were after he was a sanctified and justified person.

3. It is not the will of Christ to exempt any justified person upon earth from the duty of praying frequently and fervently for the remission of his sins. This the most eminent saints upon earth have done. The greatest favorites of heaven have heartily prayed for the remission of sin, Dan. ix. 4, 19. And that the gospel gives us no exemption from this duty, appears by Christ's injunction of it upon all his people, Mat. iv. 12.

Error V.

To give countenance to the former error, they say, *that God sees no sin in believers, whatsoever sins they commit*; and seek a covert for this error from Numb. xxiii. 21; and Jer. 1. 20. In the former place it is said by Balaam, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel." And in the other place it is said, "In those times, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Now that this opinion of the Antinomians is erroneous, will appear three ways—by its repugnancy to God's omniscience; by its inconsistency with his dispensations; by its want of a scripture-foundation.

It is true, and we thankfully acknowledge it, that God sees no sin in believers as a judge sees guilt in a malefactor, to condemn him for it; this is a sure and comfortable truth: but to say that he sees no sin in his children, as a displeased father, to correct and chasten them for it, is an assertion repugnant to scripture, and very injurious to God. For,

1. It is injurious to God's omniscience; "Thou," says holy David, "knowest my down-sitting, and mine uprising, and understandest my thoughts afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways," Psal. cxxxix. 2. "He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heavens, Job xxviii. 24. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," Prov. xv. 3. "From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth; he fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works." Psal. xxxiii. 14, 15. He who denies that God sees his most secret sins, therein consequentially denies him to be God.

2. This assertion is inconsistent with God's providential dispensations to his people. When David, a justified believer, had sinned against him in the matter of Uriah, it is said, "The thing that David had done displeased the Lord;" and, as the effect of that displeasure, it is said,

“The Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.” Among the Corinthians some who should not be condemned with the world, were judged and chastened of the Lord for their undue approaches to his table. Now, I would ask the Antinomians these two questions—first, whether it can be denied, that David, under the old testament, and these Corinthians under the new, were justified persons; and yet the former is stricken by God in his child, with its sickness and death; and the latter in like manner are smitten by God in their own persons; and both for their respective sins committed against God. And yet God saw no sin in them? Did God smite them for sin, and yet behold no sin in them? Beware lest in ascribing such strokes to God, you strike at once both at his omniscience and justice. I would ask also how God, upon confession and repentance, can be said to put away his people’s sins, as Nathan assures David he had done, when in the mean time he sees no sin in them, either to chastise them for, or to pardon in him? Do you think that God’s afflictions or pardons are blindfold acts, done at random? How inconsistent is this notion with the divine dispensations.

3. This opinion is altogether destitute of a scripture-foundation. It is evident that it has none in the place alleged for it, Numb. xxiii. 21. The learned Gataker has vindicated this scripture from this abuse of it by Antinomians, in his treatise upon that text, entitled *God’s eye upon his Israel*; where, after a learned and critical examination of the text, he tells us, that it is thus in the original, “He hath not beheld wrong against Jacob, nor hath he seen grievance against Israel;” so that the meaning is not, that God did not see sin in Israel, but that he beheld not with approbation the wrongs and injuries done by others against his Israel. And then he shows at large, by solid reasons, why the Antinomian sense cannot be the proper sense of that place, it being contrary to the main tenor of the history and the truth of God’s word, which shows, that God often complained of their sins; often threatened to avenge them; yea, did actually avenge them by destroying them in the wilderness; nay, Balaam himself, who uttered these words unto Balak, did not so

understand them, as appears by the advice he gave to Balak, to draw them into sin, that thereby God might be provoked to withdraw his protection from them.

And as for Jer. 1. 20. it makes nothing to their purpose. Many expound the sin there sought after and not found, to be the sin of idolatry, which Israel should be purged from by their captivity, according to Isa. xxvii. 9. But the generality of sound expositors are agreed, that by the not finding of Israel and Judah's sin, is meant no more, than his not finding those bonds or obligations against them to eternal punishment which their sins had put them under.

Error VI.

That God is not angry with the elect, nor does he smite them for their sins; and to say that he does so is an injurious reflection on the justice of God, who has received full satisfaction for all their sins from the hand of Christ.

There are several mistakes and errors in these assertions; and I suppose our Antinomians were led into them from a groundless apprehension, that God's corrections of us for our sins are inconsistent with the fulness of Christ's satisfaction for them. Christ having paid all our debts, and dissolved our obligations to all punishment, it cannot consist with the justice of God to lay any rod upon us for our sins, after Christ has borne all that our sins deserved.

This mistake of the end of Christ's death occasions them to stumble into the other mistakes. They imagine that Christ's satisfaction abolished God's hatred of sin in believers. But this cannot be. God's antipathy to sin can never be taken away by the satisfaction of Christ, though his hatred to the persons of the redeemed is; for the hatred of sin is founded in the unchangeable nature of God: and he can as soon cease to be holy, as cease to hate sin, Hab. i. 13. Nor was Christ's death ever designed for this end. Though Christ has satisfied for the sin of believers, God still hates sin in believers. His hatred to their sins and love to their persons are not inconsistent. As a man may love his leg or arm, as they are

members of his body, and notwithstanding this love, hate the gangrene which has seized on them, and lances or use painful corrosives for their cure.

Neither do our Antisemians distinguish, as they ought, betwixt vindictive punishments from God, the pure issues and effects of his justice and wrath against the wicked, and his paternal castigations, the pure issues of the care and love of a displeased Father. Great and manifold are the differences betwixt his vindictive wrath upon his enemies, and the rebukes of the rod upon his children. Those are legal, these evangelical. Those proceed out of wrath and hatred, these out of love. Those are unsanctified, but these blessed and sanctified to happy ends and purposes to his people. Those are for destruction, these for salvation.

To narrow the matter as much as we can, I shall lay down three concessions concerning God's corrections of his people—

1. We cheerfully and thankfully acknowledge the perfection and fulness of the satisfaction of Christ for all the sins of believers; and with thankfulness own, that if God should cast all, or any of them, into an ocean of temporal troubles and distresses, in all that sea of sorrow there would not be found one drop of vindictive wrath. Christ has drunk the last drop of that cup, and left nothing for believers to suffer by way of satisfaction.

2. We grant also, that all the sufferings of believers in this world are not for their sins; but some of them are for the prevention of sin, 2 Cor. xii. 7; some for the trial of their graces, Jam. i. 2, 3; some for a confirming testimony to the truths of God, Acts v. 41. Such sufferings as these have much heavenly comfort connected with them.

3. We do not say that God's displeasure with his people for sin, evidenced against them in the sharpest rebukes of the rod, is any argument that God's love is turned into hatred against their persons. No, his love to his people is unchangeable. Having loved his own, he loves them to the end.

Yet notwithstanding all this, three things are undeniably clear; and being thoroughly apprehended, will

end this controversy—that God lays his correcting rod in this world on the persons of believers; that this rod of God is sometimes laid on them for their sins; that these fatherly corrections of them for their sins are reconcileable to, and fully consistent with, his justice, completely satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins.

1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world upon the persons of believers. This no man has the face to deny who believes the scriptures to be the word of God, or that the troubles of good men in this life fall not out by casualty, but by the counsel and direction of divine Providence. He who denies the hand of God to be upon the persons of believers in this life, in the way of painful chastisements and sufferings, must either ignorantly or wilfully overlook that scripture, "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons," Heb. xii. 8. Nor will any sober Christian deny these troubles of believers to be the effects of God's governing providence in the world, or once imagine them to be mere casualties and contingencies; for affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble "spring out of the ground," Job v. 6. In what Utopia does that good man live, who feels not the painful rod of God upon himself, nor hears the sad laments and moans of other Christians under it! This is surely undeniable, that the rod of God is every where on the persons and tabernacles of the righteous; and if any doubt it, his own sense and feeling may in a little time give him a painful demonstration of it.

2. As for the second proposition, that this rod of God is sometimes laid on believers for their sins, methinks no sober modest Christian should doubt or deny it, when he considers, that God himself has so declared it, and that the saints in all ages have freely confesssd it to be so.

1. God himself has fully and plainly declared it to be so; "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house," 2 Sam, xii. 9.

Here is the sword, a terrible and painful evil on David's house, a man after God's own heart, and that expressly for his sin in the matter of Uriah. "For the multitudes of thine iniquities, because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee," saith God to his own Israel, Jer. xxx. 15. To instance all the declarations made by God himself in this case, were to transcribe a great part of both testaments.

And as God has declared that the sins of his people are the provoking causes of his rods upon them, so they have freely and ingenuously confessed and acknowledged the same. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord," Lam. iii. 39. "There is no soundness in my flesh," says David, "because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My wounds stink, and are corrupt because of my foolishness." And were it not an hideous and unaccountable thing to hear a child of God under his rod, to stand upon his own justification, and say, Lord, my sins have not deserved this at thy hand, nor is it justice in thee thus to chastise me after thou hast received satisfaction for all my sins from the hand of Christ? Would it not look like a horrid blasphemy to hear the best men in the world disputing and denying the justice of God in the troubles he lays him under? For my own part, let the Lord lay on as severely as he will upon me, I desire to follow the holy patterns and precedents recorded in scripture for my imitation, and to say with the people of God, Ezra ix. 13. "Thou hast punished me less than mine iniquities deserve." And Micah vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." And he who refuses so to do gives little evidence of the spirit of adoption in him, but a very clear proof of the pride and ignorance of his own heart. Job indeed stiffly stood upon his own vindication; but that was when he had to do with men who falsely charged him, laying those sins as the causes of his troubles, which he was innocent of, Job xxii. 5, 6. But when he had to do with God, he disputes no more, but says, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?

I will lay my hand upon my mouth ;" I have done, Father, I have done; whether these chastisements be for my sin or not, sure I am, my sin not only deserves all this, but hell itself. Thou art holy, but I am vile.

3. Nor can it at all be doubted, but that these fatherly corrections of the saints for their sins, are reconcileable to, and fully consistent with his justice, satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins. For if it were not so, the just and righteous God would never have inserted such a clause of reservation in his gracious covenant with his people, to chasten them as he saw need, after he had taken them into the covenant; "If they transgress, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless (saith he) my loving-kindness will I not take away," Psal. lxxxix. 30. That 'nevertheless' clearly proves the consistency of his stripes for sin, with his loving-kindness to his people, and with Christ's satisfaction for their sins.

If this were not consistent with the justice of God, surely he would never single them out to spend his rods upon, rather than others. It is most certain the holiest men have most lashes in this life. Asaph said, Psal. lxxiii. 12, 14, "The ungodly prosper in the world, but I am chastened every morning;" and ver. 5, "The wicked are not in trouble as other men." 1 Pet. iv. 17, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." And if piety would give men an exemption from all troubles, pains, and chastisements, then men might discern love or hatred by the things that are before them, contrary to Eccl. ix. 1, 2. Neither could those that are in Christ, suffer the painful agonies of death, because of sin, expressly contrary to Paul, Rom. viii. 10. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin."

In a word, as Christ never shed his blood to extinguish or abolish God's displeasure against sin, in whomsoever it be found, so he never shed it to deprive his people of the manifold blessings and advantages that accrue to them by the rods of God upon them. It was never his intention to put us into a condition on earth, that would have been so much to our loss. So then if the hand of God be upon his people for sin, and consistently with

his justice, it must be an error to say, God smites not believers for their sins, and it would be injustice in him so to do.

Error VII.

They tell us, that by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ; that not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid upon Christ, but simply the very faults that men commit, the transgression itself, became the transgression of Christ; iniquity itself, not in any figure, but plainly sin itself, was laid on Christ; and that Christ himself was no more righteous than this person is, and this person is not more sinful than Christ was.

These two propositions will never go down with sound and orthodox Christians: the first sinks and debases Christ too low, the other exalts the sinful creature too high. The one represents the pure and spotless Lord Jesus as sinful; the other represents the sinful creature as pure and perfect: and both these propositions seem evidently to be built upon these two hypotheses—that the righteousness of Christ is subjectively and inherently in us, in the same fulness and perfection as it is in Christ; grant that, and then it will follow indeed, that Christ himself is not more righteous than the believer is—that not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid on Christ by way of imputation; but sin itself, the very transgression, or sinfulness itself, was transferred from the elect to Christ; and that by God's laying it on him, the sinfulness or fault itself was essentially transfused into him—grant but this, and it can never be denied but that Christ became as completely sinful as we.

But both these hypotheses are not only notoriously false, but utterly impossible, as will be manifested by and by; but before I come to the refutation of them, it will be necessary to lay down some concessions to clear the orthodox doctrine in this controversy, and narrow the matter under debate as much as may be.—

And first, we thankfully acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the surety of the new testament, Heb. vii. 22; and that as such, all the guilt and punishment of our sins were laid upon him, Isa. liii. 5, 6; that is, God imputed, and he bare it in our room and stead. God the Father, as supreme Lawgiver and Judge of all, on the transgression of the law, admitted the suretiship of Christ, to answer for the sins of men, Heb. x. 5, 7; and for this very end Christ was made under the law, Gal. iv. 4, 5; and voluntarily took upon him to answer, as our Surety, whatsoever the law could lay to our charge; whence it became just and righteous that he should suffer.

2. We say, that by God's imputing the guilt of our sins to Christ, our sins became legally his; as the debt is legally the surety's debt, though he never borrowed one farthing of it. God laid, and Christ took, our sins upon him, though in him was no sin; "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;" that is, who was clean and altogether void of sin, 2 Cor. v. 21.

3. We thankfully acknowledge, that Christ has so fully satisfied the law for the sins of all who are his, that the debts of believers are fully discharged, and the very last mite paid by Christ. His payment is full, and so therefore is our discharge and acquittance, Rom. viii. 1, 31. By virtue hereof, the guilt of a believer is so perfectly abolished, that it shall never more bring him under condemnation, John v. 24; and so in Christ he is without fault before God.

4. We likewise grant, that as the guilt of our sins was by God's imputation laid upon Christ, so the righteousness of Christ is by God imputed to believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; and becomes thereby as truly and fully theirs, for the justification of their persons before God, as if they themselves had in their own persons fulfilled all that the law requires, or suffered all that is threatened. No inherent righteousness in our own persons, is or can be more truly our own, for this end and purpose, than Christ's imputed righteousness is our own. He is "the Lord our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. "We are made the righteousness of God

in him," 1 Cor. v. 21. "Yea, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them that believe," Rom. viii. 4.

But notwithstanding all this, we cannot say, that Christ became as completely sinful as we; or that we are as completely righteous as Christ; or that besides the guilt and punishment of sin, which we grant was laid upon Christ, sin itself simply considered, or the very transgression of itself, became the sin or transgression of Christ; and consequently that we are as completely righteous as Christ, and Christ as completely sinful as we are.

1. We dare not say, that sin simply considered, as the very transgression of the law itself, as well as the guilt and punishment, became the very sin and transgression of Christ; for two things are distinctly to be considered and distinguished, with respect to the law. We are to consider it in its preceptive part, and in its sanction.

The preceptive part of the law gives sin its formal nature; "Sin is the transgression of the law." All transgression arises from the preceptive part of the law of God. He who transgresseth the precepts, sins; and under this consideration sin can never be communicated from one to another. The personal sin of one, cannot be, in this respect, the personal sin of another. There is no physical transfusion of the transgression of the precept from one subject to another: this is utterly impossible. Even Adam's personal sins, considered in his single private capacity, are not communicable to his posterity.

Besides the transgression of the preceptive part of the law, there is a liability to punishment, arising from the sanction of the law, which we call the guilt of sin; and this, as Dr. Owen observes, is separable from sin. If it were not separable from the former, no sinner in the world could either be pardoned or saved. Guilt may be made another's by imputation, and yet that other not rendered formally a sinner thereby. On this ground, we say the guilt and punishment of our sin, was that only which was imputed to Christ, but the very transgression of the law itself, or sin formally and essentially considered, could never be communicated or transfused from us unto him. I know but two ways in the world by which one

man's sins can be imagined to become another's, either by imputation, which is legal; or by essential transfusion from subject to subject, which is utterly impossible; and we have as good ground to believe the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, as this wild notion of the essential transfusion of sin. Guilt arising from the sanction of the law may and did pass from us to Christ by legal imputation; but sin itself, the very transgression itself, arising from the preceptive part of the law, cannot so pass from us to Christ; for if we should once imagine, that the very acts and habits of sin, with the odious deformity thereof, should pass from our persons to Christ, and subjectively to inhere in him, as they do in us; then it would follow, that our salvation would thereby be rendered utterly impossible.

The supposition would render the blood of the cross altogether unable to satisfy for us. He could not have been the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, if he had not been perfectly pure and spotless. Besides, had our sins thus been essentially transfused into Christ, then I cannot see, but that the very same acts and habits of sin must inhere both in Christ and in believers also. I suppose that our adversaries will not deny, but that notwithstanding God's laying the sins of believers upon Christ, there remain in all believers after their justification, sinful inclinations, a law of sin in their members, a body of sin and death. Did these things pass from them to Christ, and yet do they still inhere in them? Why do they complain and groan of indwelling sin, if sin itself be so transferred from them to Christ? Unless men will dare to say, that the same acts and habits of sin which they feel in themselves are as truly in Christ as in themselves, they have surely no ground to say, that by God's laying their iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as they are; and if they should so affirm, that affirmation would undermine the very foundation of their own salvation.

I therefore heartily subscribe to that sound and holy sentence, of a clear and learned divine, Dr. Owen, "Nothing is more absolutely true, nothing more sacredly and assuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Christ

did or suffered, nothing that he undertook or underwent, did or could constitute him subjectively, inherently, and thereupon personally, a sinner, or guilty of any sin of his own. To bear the guilt or blame of other men's faults, makes no man a sinner, unless he did unwisely and irregularly undertake it." So then this proposition, that by God's laying our sins upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, will not and ought not to be received as the sound doctrine of the gospel.

2. Nor yet this second proposition, that we are as completely righteous as Christ is; or, that Christ is not more righteous than a believer.

I cannot imagine what should induce any man thus to express himself, unless it be a groundless conceit and fancy, that there is an essential transfusion of Christ's justifying righteousness into believers, whereby it becomes theirs by way of subjective inhesion, and is in them in the very same manner it is in him; and so every individual believer becomes as completely righteous as Christ. And this conceit they would fain establish upon that text, "He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous," 1 John iii. 7. But neither this expression, nor any other like it in the scriptures, gives the least countenance to such a position. It is far from the meaning of this scripture, that the righteousness of Christ is formally and inherently ours, as it is his. It is indeed ours relatively, not formally and inherently; not the same with his for quantity, though it is the same for verity. His righteousness is not ours in its value, though it is ours as to our particular use and necessity. Nor is it made ours to make us so many causes of salvation to others; but it is imputed to us as to the subjects, who are to be saved by it.

It is true, we are justified and saved by the righteousness of Christ, but that righteousness is formally inherent in him only, and is only materially imputed to us. It was actively his, but passively ours. He wrought it, though we wear it. It was wrought in the person of God-man for the whole church, and is imputed, not transfused, to every single believer for his own concernment only.

If it were inherent in us, it could not be imputed to us, as it is, Rom. iv. 6, 23. Nor need we go out of ourselves for justification, as now we must, Phil. iii. 9. but might justify ourselves by our own inherent righteousness. And what should hinder, if this infinite righteousness of Christ were infused into us, and made us as completely righteous as Christ, but that we might justify others also as Christ does, and so might be the saviours of the elect, as Christ is? And according to Antinomian principles, what need was there that we should be justified at all? or, what place is left for the justification of any sinner in the world? For, according to their opinion, the justification of the elect is an immanent act of God before the world was; and that eternal act of justification making the elect as completely righteous as Christ himself, there could not possibly be any the least guilt in the elect to be pardoned; and consequently no place or room could be left for any justification in time. And then it must follow, that seeing Christ died in time, for sin, according to the scriptures; it must be for his own sins that he died, and not for the sins of the elect; a conclusion diametrically opposite to the whole current of scripture and faith of Christians.

It is therefore very unbecoming and unworthy of a justified person, after Christ has taken all his guilt upon himself, and suffered all the punishment due thereunto in his place and room; instead of an humble and thankful admiration of his unparalleled grace therein, to throw more than the guilt and punishment of his sins upon Christ, even the transgression itself; and comparing his own righteousness with Christ's, to say he is as completely righteous as Christ himself. This is, as though a company of bankrupt debtors, arrested for their own debts, ready to be cast into prison, and not having one farthing to pay, after their debts have been freely and fully discharged by another out of his immense treasure, should now compare themselves with him; yea, and think that they honor him, by telling him, that they are as completely rich as himself.

I am well assured, no good man would embrace an opi-

nion so derogatory to Christ's honor as this is, did he but see the odious consequences of it. And as for those now in heaven, who fell into such mistakes in the way thither, were they now acquainted with what is transacted here below, they would exceedingly rejoice in the detection of those mistakes, and bless God for the refutation of them.

Error VIII.

The Antinomians affirm, that believers need not fear their own sins, nor the sins of others, forasmuch as neither their own or others' sins can do them any hurt; nor must they perform any duty for their own good or salvation, or for eternal rewards.

That we need fear no hurt from sin, or may not aim at our own good in duty, are two propositions that sound harsh in the ears of believers. I shall consider them severally, and refute them as briefly as I can.

1. "Believers need not fear their own sins, or the sins of others; because neither our own or others' sins can do us any hurt."

They seem to be led into this error, by misunderstanding the apostle, in Rom. viii. 28, as if the scope of that text were to assert the benefits of sin to justified persons; whereas he speaks there of adversities and afflictions befalling the saints in this life. Nothing is spoken of sin in this text. The apostle plainly shows, in ver. 38, what are the things he intended by his expression in ver. 28; as also in what respect no creature can do the saints any hurt, namely, that they shall never be able "to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And in this respect it is true, that the sins of the elect shall not hurt them, by frustrating the purpose of God concerning their eternal salvation; or totally and finally to separate them from his love. This we grant, and yet we think it a very unwaried and unsound expression, that "believers need not fear their own sins, because they can do them no hurt." It is too general and unguarded a

proposition to be received for truth. What if their sin cannot do them that hurt, to frustrate the purpose of God, and condemn them to eternity in the world to-come? Can it therefore do them no hurt at all in their present state of conflict with it in this world? For my part, I think the greatest fear is due to sin, the greatest evil; and that Chrysostom spake like a Christian, when he said, "I fear nothing but sin." Though sin cannot finally ruin the believer, yet it can many ways hurt and injure the believer, and therefore ought not to be misrepresented as such an innocent and harmless thing to them. In vain are so many terrible threatenings in the scriptures against it, if it can do us no hurt; and it is certain nothing can do us good, but that which makes us better and more holy.

But, to come to an issue, sin may be considered three ways, formally, effectively, reductively.

Consider it, Formally, as a transgression of the preceptive part of the law of God; and under that consideration it is the most formidable evil in the whole world, the evil of evils, that at which every gracious heart trembles, and ought rather to chuse banishment, prison, and death itself in the most terrible form.

Sin may be considered effectively, with respect to the manifold mischiefs and calamities it produces in the world, and the evils it brings on believers themselves. Though it cannot ruin their souls, yet it makes war against their souls, and brings them into miserable bondage and captivity, Rom. vii. 23. It wounds their souls, under which wounds they are feeble, and sore broken; yea, they roar by reason of the disquietness of their hearts, Psalm xxxviii. 5, 8. Are war, captivity, festering, painful wounds, no hurt to believers? It breaks their very bones, Psal. li. 8; and is that no hurt? It draws off their minds from God, interrupts their prayers and meditations, Rom. vii. 18, 21; and is there no hurt in that? It causes their graces to decline, wither, and languish to that degree, that the things which are in them are ready to die, Rev. iii. 1; Rev. ii. 4; and is the loss of grace and spiritual strength no hurt to a believer? It hides the face of God from them, Isa. lix. 2; and is there no hurt in spiritual

withdrawments of God from their souls ? Why then do deserted saints so bitterly lament and bemoan it ? It provokes innumerable afflictions, and miseries which fall upon our bodies, relations, estates ; and if sin be the cause of all these inward and outward miseries to the people of God, surely then there is some hurt in sin, on account of which the saints ought to be afraid of it.

Sin may be considered reductively, as it is over-ruled by the covenant of grace. Under this consideration of sin, which rather respects the future than the present state, the Antinomians respect only the hurt or evil of it; overlooking both the former considerations of sin, which concern the present state of believers, and so rashly pronounce, that sin can do believers no hurt; an assertion tending to a great deal of licentiousness. A man drinks deadly poison, and is, after many months, recovered by the skill of an excellent physician; shall we say, that there was no hurt in it, because the man died not of it ? Surely those fearful pains he felt, his loss of strength, were hurtful to him, though he escaped with life and got this advantage by it, to be more wary for ever after.

And then, as for not fearing on account of other men's sins, it is an assertion against all the laws of charity ; for the sins of wicked men eternally damn them, disturb the peace and order of the world, draw down national judgments on the whole community, cause wars, plagues, and persecutions. The consideration of the sins of others opened fountains of tears in David's eyes, Psal. cxix. 136; caused horror to take hold upon him, ver. 53; and yet, if you will believe the Antinomian doctrine, believers have no need to fear, much less to be in horror, which is the extremity of fear, for other men's sins. How is Satan gratified, and how are temptations to sin strengthened on the souls of men, by such indistinct, unwary, and dangerous expressions as these ! A good intention can be no sufficient excuse for such assertions.

2. They tell us, that "as the saints need fear no sin for any hurt it can do them, so they must do no duty for their own good, or with an eye to their own salvation, or eternal rewards in heaven."

This assertion, as well as the former, is too generally and indistinctly delivered. He who distinguishes well, teacheth well. The confounding of things which ought to be distinguished, easily runs men into errors. Two things ought to have been distinguished here—ends in duties, and self-ends in duties.

There are two ends in duties, one supreme and ultimate, the glorifying of God; another secondary and subordinate, the good and benefit of ourselves. To invert these, and place our own good in the room of God's glory, is sinful and unjustifiable; and he who aims only at himself in religion, is justly censured as a mercenary servant, especially if it be any external good he aims at; but spiritual good, especially the enjoyment of God, is so involved in the other, namely the glory of God, that no man can rightly take the Lord for his God, but he must take him for his supreme good, and consequently therein may, and must have, a due respect to his own happiness.

Self-ends must always be distinguished into corrupt or carnal self-ends, and pure and spiritual self-ends.

As to carnal and corrupt self-ends, inviting and moving men to the performance of religious duties, when these are the only ends men aim at, they betray the hypocrisy of the heart, and accordingly God charges hypocrisy upon such persons. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds. They assemble themselves for corn and wine," Hos. vii. 14. God reckons not the most solemn duties, animated by such ends, to be done unto him; "Did ye at all fast unto me?" Zech. vii. 5.

But besides these, man has a best self, a spiritual self, to regard in duty, the conformity of his soul to God in holiness, and the perfect fruition of God in glory. Such holy self-ends as these are often commended, but nowhere condemned in scripture. It was the encomium of Moses, that "he had respect unto the recompence of reward." These respects to our spiritual best self, are so far from being our sin, that God both appoints and allows them for great uses and advantages to his people in their way to glory. They are singular encouragements to the

saints under persecutions, straits, and distresses, Heb. x. 34: and to that end Christ proposes them, Luke xii. 32; and so the best of saints have made use of them, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. They are motives and incentives to praise and thankfulness, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4; Col. i. 12. They stir up the saints to cheerful and vigorous industry for God, Col. iii. 23, 34; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Now to cut off from religion all these spiritual and excellent self-respects, and to make them our sins and marks of hypocrisy, is an error very injurious to the gospel, and to the souls of men. It crosses the strain of the gospel, which commands us to strive for our salvation, Luke xiii. 24, 25; Phil. ii. 12; 1 Tim. iv. 16. It blames that in the saints as sinful, which the scripture notes as their excellency, and records to their praise, Heb. xi. 26. It makes the laws of Christianity thwart and cross the very fundamental law of our creation, which inclines and obliges all men to aim at their own felicity. It unreasonably supposes a Christian may not do that for his own soul, which he daily does, and is bound to do for other men's souls, to pray, preach, exhort, and reprove for their salvation.

Error IX.

They will not allow the new covenant to be properly made with us, but with Christ for us. And some of them affirm, That this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition on our part. They acknowledge, indeed, faith, repentance, and obedience, to be conditions, but say they are not conditions on our part, but on Christ's; and consequently affirm, that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us.

The confounding of distinct covenants leads them into this error. We acknowledge there was a covenant properly made with Christ alone, which we call the covenant of redemption. This covenant indeed, though it were made for us, yet it was not made with us. It

had its condition, and that condition was laid only upon Christ, that he should assume our nature, and pour out his soul unto death, which condition he was solely concerned to perform. But besides this, there is a covenant of grace made with him and with all believers in him; with him primarily, as the head; with them as the members, who personally come into this covenant, when they come into the union with him by faith. This covenant of grace is not made with Christ alone, personally considered, but with Christ and all that are his, mystically considered, and is properly made with all believers in Christ; and therefore it is called their covenant; "As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water," Zech. ix. 11. So when God entered into the covenant of grace with Abraham, he said, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee," Gen. xvii. 7. So when he took the people of Israel into this covenant, "I sware unto thee," said he, "and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 8.

This covenant of grace made with believers in Christ, is not the same, nor must it be confounded, with the covenant of redemption made with Christ before the world began: they are two distinct covenants. In the covenant of grace, into which believers are taken, there is a Mediator, and this Mediator is Christ himself; but in the other covenant of redemption, there neither was, nor could be any Mediator; which manifestly distinguishes them. Besides, in the covenant of grace, Christ bequeaths manifold and rich legacies, as he is the Testator; but no man gives a legacy to himself. This covenant is really and properly made with every believer, as he is a member of Jesus Christ, the head; and they are truly and properly federates with God. The covenant binds them to their duties and encourages them therein by promises of strength to be derived from Christ, to enable them thereunto.

We thankfully acknowledge, that the glory of the new covenant is chiefly discovered in the promises thereof.

It is established on the best promises; all the promises are reducible to it; they meet and centre in it, as the rivers in the sea, or beams in the sun. But yet we cannot say, that nothing but promises is contained in this covenant; for there are duties required by it, as well as mercies promised in it.

Nor may we say, that those duties required by it are required only to be performed by Christ, and not by us; they are required to be performed by us in his strength. Nor is it Christ who repents and believes for us, but we ourselves are to believe and repent in the strength of his grace: and till we actually do so in our own persons, we have no part or portion in the blessings and mercies of this covenant.

If Christ by believing for us, gives us an actual right and title to the promises and blessings of the new covenant, then it will unavoidably follow, that men who never repented for one sin in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly are pardoned, as much as the greatest penitents in the world; because though they never repented themselves, yet Christ repented for them; expressly contrary to his own words, " Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and contrary to his own established order, Luke xxix. 47; Acts iii. 19.

It will also follow, that unbelievers who never had union with Christ by one vital act of faith in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly shall be saved, as well as those who are actual believers: because though they are unbelievers in themselves, yet Christ believed for them; expressly contrary to Mark xvi. 16; " He that believeth not shall be damned." " He that believes not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36.

It will also follow from hence, that men may continue in a state of disobedience all their days, and yet be saved, as well as the most obedient souls in the world; expressly contrary to Eph. v. 6; " Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." And Rom. ii. 8; " But unto them that are contentious, and

do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." And 1 Pet. iv. 17; "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

This language sounds strange and harsh to the ears of Christians, "A repenting Christ saving the impenitent sinner; a believing Christ saving unbelievers; an obeying Christ saving obstinate and disobedient wretches." Whither does such doctrine tend, but to encourage and fix men in their impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience? But the Lord grant no poor sinner in the world may trust to this, or build his hopes of eternal life on such a loose, sandy foundation, as this is. Reader, all that Christ has done without thee, will not, cannot, be effectual to thy salvation, unless repentance, faith, and obedience, be wrought by the Spirit in thy soul. It is "Christ in thee, that is 'the hope of glory;'" beware therefore on what ground thou buildest for eternity.

Error X.

They deny sanctification to be the evidence of justification, and deridingly tell us, that this is to light a candle to the sun; and that the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is.

I am not at all surprised at this strange language. It is a false and dangerous conclusion, yet such as naturally results from and follows out of their other errors; for if the elect be all justified from eternity, and neither repentance, faith, nor obedience, is required of us in the covenant of grace, but were all required of, and performed by Christ, who repented, believed, and obeyed for us; then, indeed, I cannot understand what relation our sanctification has to our justification; or how it should be an evidence, mark, or sign thereof; or what regard is due from Christians to any grace, or work of the Spirit wrought in them, to clear up their interest in Christ to them. We being in Christ, and in a state of justification, before we were naturally born, we must necessarily be so before we be regenerated or new-born; and consequently,

no work of grace wrought in us, or holy duties performed by us, can be evidential of that which from eternity was done before them, and without them.

I grant, indeed, that many vain professors do cheat, and deceive themselves, by false unscriptural signs and evidences, as well as by true ones misapplied.

I grant also, that by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart, instability of the thoughts, similar works of common grace in hypocrites, distractions of the world, wiles of Satan, weakness of grace, and prevalency of corruptions, the clearing up of our justification by our sanctification, is a work that meets with great and manifold difficulties.

I also grant, that the evidence of our sanctification in this, or any other method, is not essential, and absolutely necessary to the being of a Christian. A man may live in Christ, and yet not know his interest in him, or relation to him, Isa. l. 10.

I will further grant, that the eye of a Christian may be too intently fixed upon his own gracious qualifications; and being wholly taken up in the reflex acts of faith, may too much neglect the direct acts of faith upon Christ, to the great detriment of his soul.

But notwithstanding all this, the examination of our justification by our sanctification, is not only a lawful and possible, but a very excellent and necessary work and duty. It is the course which Christians have taken in all ages, and that which God has abundantly blessed to the joy and encouragement of their souls.

He has furnished our souls to this end with noble self-reflecting powers and abilities. He has furnished his word with variety of marks and signs, for the same end and use. Some of these marks are *exclusive*, to detect and bar bold presumptuous pretenders, 1 Cor. vi. 9; Rev. xxi. 8, 27; some are inclusive marks, to measure the strength and growth of grace by, Rom. iv. 20; and others are positive signs, flowing out of the very essence of grace, or the new creature, 1 John iv. 13.

He has also expressly commanded us to examine and prove ourselves; upbraided the neglecters of that duty, and enforced it on them by a thundering argument; "Exa-

mine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5. In a word, for this end and purpose, amongst others, were the scriptures written, "These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life," 1 John v. 13. And therefore to neglect this duty is exceedingly dangerous; but to deny and deride it is intolerable. It may be justly feared, that such men will be drowned in perdition, who fall into the waters, by making a bridge over them with their own shadows.

For my own part, I verily believe, that the sweetest hours Christians enjoy in this world, are when they retire into their closets, and sit there concealed from all eyes but his who made them; looking now into the bible, then into their own hearts, and then up to God; closely following the grand debate about their interest in Christ, till they have brought it to the happy desired issue.

And now, reader, I call the Searcher of hearts to witness, that I have not intermeddled with these controversies out of any delight I take in polemical studies, or from an unpeaceable contradicting humor, but out of pure zeal for the glory and truth of God; for the vindication and defence whereof I have been necessarily engaged therein. And having discharged my duty thus far, I now resolve to return, if God will permit me, to my much sweeter and more agreeable studies; still maintaining my Christian charity for those whom I oppose, not doubting but I shall meet those in heaven, from whom I am forced, in lesser things, to dissent and differ upon earth.'

THE END.



